



# ECSA Annual Report

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2014

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## **Contents**

Foreword.....	2
You Said We Did.....	4
ECSA Values.....	5
Sabbatical Officer Reports.....	9
Executive Officer Team.....	6
Your Say.....	11
Appendix 1 – Partnership Agreement....	14

## Foreword

Last year's President looks back on the development and success of the Students' Association from its formation to the present...

When the Edinburgh College Students' Association (ECSA) was formed as part of the new college's creation, it took its initial structure from the results of student feedback and set out with a clear vision; to champion a life-changing education experience for all students at Edinburgh College. In 2013/14 we took this to a whole new level, with a stronger voice and a strategic student led direction, we achieved a new era in representing students at Edinburgh College and set a precedent for college Students' Associations across the country.

Through having high profile successful campaigns, representation structures recognised as national best practice, an unprecedented level of engagement and a more accountable structure, ECSA proved themselves to be worthy of national recognition. At the NUS Scotland awards ceremony in March 2014 ECSA were awarded the prestigious 'College Students' Association of the Year', only to be topped off by winning the UK-wide 'FE Students' Union of the Year', a huge double achievement - and a first for any college in Scotland.

The change in structure of the Vice Presidents last year to a remit based approach was incredibly successful, and led to more coherent, focused, accountable ways of working. This ensured that more Edinburgh College students than ever were aware of the Students' Association and ECSA recorded the highest levels of engagement of any Scottish institution in its sabbatical elections in May 2014.

Much of this engagement was achieved through having well thought out, structured and planned Class Representative training. Meetings were well planned and attended throughout the year and key to the democratic accountability of ECSA.

Campaigns that focused on equality and fairness for students were a priority of ECSA in 13/14 and led to a positive partnered approach with the College that made improvements in childcare, support for carers and care leavers, and awareness campaigns tackling sexism on campus and curriculum segregation.

ECSA ran a varied programme of activities including Club Nights that were praised by national media and a variety of internal events, societies and clubs that varied from the Law society to the Doctor Who club to mental health awareness events.

On a national level, ECSA is now one of the most recognised Students' Associations in the country – helped by successful campaigns lobbying key politicians, speaking at

national events and rallies and working with stakeholders to ensure ECSA's best practice could be used successfully elsewhere.

Looking ahead, with a sustainable structure and funding, 14/15 is an exciting year for ECSA.

We would like to extend our thanks to all our members, staff, volunteers, class reps and partners and of course the 2013/14 team. We will continue to build on the progress made over the last year, and we look forward to another productive year.



Kelly Parry, ECSA President 2013/2014

## **You said we did!**

We set up new sports, clubs and societies! We made our officers and staff more accessible, visible and easy to contact! We held drop in sessions for students and managers! **We ran a successful campaign to reduce food prices, improve quality with an ethical in house model!** We ran national campaigns on bedroom tax, student poverty and funding! We became members of the Refugee Council! **We signed up to the Who Cares? Scotland Pledge – and persuaded the college to too!** We ran events about mental health! We raised money for charity! **We ran training sessions on lad culture and consent!** We elected more class reps than ever before! We launched our website! **We ran training and education events for apprentices! We ran club nights! We funded class and society events and trips!** We campaigned for gender neutral toilets! We represented you in academic appeals! **We ran peer support groups for student parents and care leavers! We ran independence debates!** We challenged racism homophobia and sexism directly on campus and in our communities! We made more student friendly policies for vulnerable groups! **We fought and won for additional £100,000 funding for students at the end of the year!** We ran the first high profile independence debate of any college or university in Scotland! **We empowered students to have the highest number of candidates of any college or university in Scotland! We took part in national media events and took ECSA to Newsnight and Sky News!** We met with key politicians and achieved national wins to improve student support! **We had the most sabbatical candidates in 2014 of any institution in Scotland!**

## **ECSA Values**

*The core values at the heart of all ECSA's work, now and in the future, aims to capture the four key themes of Democracy, Equality, Empowerment and Partnership – or D.E.E.P for short! Here's how we incorporated them into our work across 2014:*

### **Democracy**



#### **Class Reps & Representation**

The electing and training of class representatives at Edinburgh College class reps this academic session changed significantly. The Students Association for the first time took responsibility for the management of the entire class rep structure, a responsibility previously shared between ourselves and the Quality Enhancement team.

We created tailored resources to support Learning development Tutors in the electing of class reps and created an online system for sending information to ECSA which linked into a central class rep database. We also brought the SPARQS associate trainers in house, creating employment opportunities for students at Edinburgh College. The Associate trainers received specialist training at Strathclyde University in August 2013 and commenced the training of hundreds of class reps managed by the students association in October 2013. We changed the way we communicated with class representatives, with the creation of our new website, we also created a dedicated Facebook page and class representative group which has over 200 class reps.

The class representatives attended regular monthly meetings with ECSA with the dates being set for the year we were able to promote the class rep meetings using our monthly email which was sent by the Student President, as well as on Facebook, our website and Moodle.

This year we have engaged diverse cross section of students, including students who are based in ESOL and East Lothian Communities and Outreach Centres. We delivered class rep training in partnership with the ESOL department to students based in 40 classrooms over 17 community centres throughout Edinburgh, supporting students with issues that were affecting them and promoting the Students Association throughout the year.

## Equality

### Outcome agreements

ECSA worked in partnership with Edinburgh College and students, from a variety of backgrounds and diverse groups to influence the College's Outcome Agreement (OA). The OA, in addition to the compulsory measures set by the SFC, has a specific section and measures put in place by ECSA including, amongst others, women in STEM courses, students influencing the planning and delivery of their course and all College policies having ECSA sign off. The level of input ECSA had into the OA was unprecedented and will lead to real change within the College and students' lives.



## Empowerment



ECSA Sabbatical and Executive Officers attended various NUS conferences over 2013/2014 shaping national policy and empowering students to help shape Edinburgh College and wider society. We were also delighted to have Edinburgh College students elected to the following national committees:

- NUS UK Women's Committee and Black Students sub-Committee
- NUS Scotland Women's Committee
- NUS Scotland Black Students Committee
- NUS Scotland Executive Committee

This ensures that representation for Edinburgh College is at the highest it can be at a national level, with ECSA now having more representation in more committees than any institution in Scotland.

### **Student Reviews**

ECSA and the College agreed to implement a programme of Student Reviews as part of the College's commitment to continuously improve the quality of the student experience.

It involved recruiting students to act as Student Reviewers across all campuses and the Quality Enhancement Team training the Student Reviewers to gather information from students using an agreed set of questions relating to a selected aspect of the student experience. ECSA and the Quality Enhancement Team supported the Student Reviewers to write a brief report on the responses given by interviewees.

The Student Reviews program ensured there was an additional mechanism for students to have their views heard and was successfully trialled at the Pennypit Outreach Centre. Following the success of the trial it will be rolled out to all main campuses next year.

## **Partnership**

### **Partnership Agreement**

Edinburgh College Students' Association now has in place a Student Partnership Agreement with Edinburgh College. A Student Partnership Agreement is an effective way of formalising and developing the relationship between the Students' Association and the College. It sets out the joint areas of work that will be undertaken together, lays out specific objectives and shows how they can be achieved. The Agreement will ensure that ECSA has a real impact on students' lives and will be a crucial part of the College's Student Engagement strategy.

The Agreement will lead to a direct improvement in the Student Experience and focus on the things that matter for students. In addition, the Partnership Agreement will set the tone for how ECSA and the College will work together in the long term. The agreement has been seen as sector leading and has attracted praise from across the sector.





SPEAKING ABOUT THE PARTNERED APPROACH, CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING MICHAEL RUSSELL MSP SAID: "I AM DELIGHTED TO WELCOME EDINBURGH COLLEGE'S STEPS TO GIVE STUDENTS A POWERFUL VOICE AND ENHANCE THEIR INFLUENCE OVER KEY DECISIONS. A CENTRAL AIM OF OUR COLLEGE REFORMS WAS TO PUT STUDENTS AT THE CENTRE, A PROMISE WE UNDERPINNED WITH LEGISLATION TO INCREASE THEIR REPRESENTATION ON BOARDS AND REQUIRING INSTITUTIONS TO HAVE STUDENTS ASSOCIATIONS.

"THIS ANNOUNCEMENT REPRESENTS YET ANOTHER STEP FORWARD IN STRENGTHENING THE VOICE OF STUDENTS AND I BELIEVE THE COLLEGE CAN ONLY BENEFIT FROM LISTENING CLOSELY TO THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER MOST."

Additional information:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/357943/0120971.pdf> - Putting Learners at the Centre.

<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/Student%20Partnership%20Agreement%20Guidance%20-%20final%20version.pdf> - Sparqs guidance on Student Partnership Agreements.

## Sabbatical Officer Reports



### President – Kelly Parry

As well as being a board member of Edinburgh College, Kelly also served as an NUS Scotland Executive Committee Officer, focusing on access and funding. A founding Vice President, Kelly attended Board meetings and Edinburgh College Leadership meetings to represent students at the highest level. Kelly also met with the Cabinet Secretary for lifelong Learning in 2014 and led a review of Student Funding in 2014 for the Scottish Funding Council. As well as leading the team to secure the biggest operational funding grant ever seen in a Scottish College, Kelly was also responsible for overseeing projects such as the joint Outcome Agreement process as well as supporting students on a day to day basis.

### VP Women's Officer – Katy Nixon

The VP women's officer role made an incredible impact in the first year of the roles existence. Katy Nixon led various campaigns to engage and educate the student and staff population on lad culture, as well as setting up self-defence classes and organised engaging events that highlighted inequalities in society, as well as on campuses. Katy has won several awards for her work, including the NUS Scotland Women's Campaign 'Inspirational women of the year 2013, and shortlisted again in 2014 along with winning the 2014 award for 'Women's group of the year' for her work in Edinburgh College.

Katy also worked with other liberation officers from the ECSA executive team and lobbied the college to ensure equality was not a barrier for any student - ensuring that the college had gender neutral toilets, a robust disciplinary policy for sexual harassment and flexible policies for student parents and carers. Katy became the second student board member in

2014, Katy's membership led to Edinburgh College becoming the first college in Scotland to be gender equal at Board level.

### **VP Welfare – Raphael Lehmann**

Raphael Lehmann, a volunteer executive officer in 2013, led the welfare and activities remit to cover some of ECSA most remarkable and influential campaigns and achievements. The highly significant campaign to bring catering back in-house was a contentious issue for some. However, with an evidence based approach combined with engaging students to physically campaign the announcement in July that the catering was to move to an in-house provision was enormously welcomed.

Along with running an extensive programme of sporting and social activities the VP Welfare also ran various events to reduce the stigma and raise awareness of mental health issues as well as working with organisations such as the Refugee council to increase access to disadvantaged student groups. Raphael successfully lobbied for both the college and ECSA to become full members of the Refugee council.

### **VP Education – James Moohan**

James Moohan, a founding Vice President in 2013, revolutionised the student representation of ECSA structures. Merging three previous systems from the legacy colleges, as well as embedding and over-laying the structures to meet the needs of both the college and students seen ECSA become sector leaders for college Student Associations'. James was the driving force behind the Edinburgh College Partnership Agreement which officially recognises the joint aims of both ECSA and the college to provide access, ensure equality and promote the best learning experience possible for all students.

Led by the VP Education, ECSA was the first college to run a targeted campaign to engage student apprentices, a group often underrepresented in democratic structures. Running events such as 'Imagine tomorrow, Change today' engaged apprentices from all levels, backgrounds and modes of study. The feedback from which has helped shape the future curriculum and the Edinburgh College Outcome Agreement, ensuring that the quality of education is of paramount importance.

James was also an elected Education Officer of the NUS Scotland Executive Committee and represented ECSA on a national level, including giving key speeches at the NUS annual national conference event.

## **ECSA Executive Officer Team 2014**

The 2014 ECSA executive officer team were highly engaged and motivated officers, leading campaigns in their own right and ensuring that the ECSA sabbatical Officers were held accountable to them, and to students. The officer team was made up of:

- BME Officer Abena Gyasi (ELECTED)
- Campaigns Officer Ellys Sugarman (ELECTED)
- Campus Rep – Granton Nathan Sullivan (ELECTED)
- Campus Rep – Midlothian Stephen Phair (ELECTED)
- Campus Rep – Milton Road Kirsty Dunlop (ELECTED)
- Campus Rep – Sighthill Dylan Donoghew (ELECTED)
- Ethics & Sustainability Officer Niel Hansen (ELECTED)
- Events & Societies Officer Drew McMath (ELECTED)
- LGBT Officer Paul Woodland (ELECTED)
- LGBT Officer (Women's Place) Danielle Wheeler (ELECTED)
- Sports President Max Schulberg (ELECTED)
- Students with Disabilities Officer Jack Bell (ELECTED)
- Welfare Officer Diane Erasmuson (ELECTED)
- Women's Officer Lyndsey King (ELECTED)



**Key achievements and successes of the executive team:**

- Set up a care leavers support network for students to offer peer support.
- Lobbied ECSA and Edinburgh College to sign up to the Who Cares? Pledge.
- Worked in partnership to ensure that the college was an accessible educational institution for care leavers - leading to the college being officially certified by the Butler Mark UK.
- Led campaigns to tackle gender segregation on vocational courses.
- Engaged students by writing blogs and staffing offices.
- Were key to the definition of student priorities captured in both the Partnership Agreement and the Edinburgh College Outcome Agreement measures.
- Played an active role in sub committees of the Academic Board.
- Represented Edinburgh College students at National Union of Student Events

## **What Students Said...**

During the year we captured some feedback from students, here's what they said about us in 2014:

*"I now have confirmation from the college that I can continue to study here, and that at some point I will have my predicted grades for my application to study medicine.*

*I shared with Raph some of the communication issues I have been having and received the reassurance from the college I needed so that we can work together and ensure I have the right information to do what is required by the college in the course of the year.*

*I am so glad I got ECSA involved. And I am thankful to you all, and the college, for helping me.*

*You and the other officers have really made a difference to me and my trust in the college is restored. Please pass on my thanks"* – **Prospective medical student.**

*"Just thought I would let you know that I have received an email back and I now have in place my student loan which will include the bursary and lone parent element that I never knew about.*

*I should hear word in the next seven to ten days.*

*Thank you again for all your help and support, you are an absolute diamond"* – **Single Parent Student**

*"It's just great to know that for once in my life I actually do have the support and help I need in order to advance my knowledge and get out there and join the fight to make this world a better place and a more equal place for our children and our children's children. I will also be looking for opportunities to become a part of that work within the students association now"*

**- Social Care Student**

*"ECSA is doing amazing things this year"* – **Returning Student**

*Without ECSA I would never have been able to apply to Edinburgh University to study History and Sociology and have a place for next year. Thanks to all the sabbs, the staff and everyone else for making sure my funding was through in time when the system failed, a support network was in place and I was safe and well in my studies after I suffered illness both physical and mental. Thank you so much, you've been amazing. Thank you!!!* – **HNC social Science Student successfully completed and moved on to study History and Sociology at Edinburgh University**

## **Edinburgh College and Edinburgh College Students’ Association Student Partnership Agreement**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this agreement is to outline the partnership between Edinburgh College and Edinburgh College Students’ Association (ECSA.)

The College and ECSA both wish to build on our existing strengths in working together to further enhance the student experience at Edinburgh College. This agreement details our agreed priorities for the academic year 2014-15 and describes how all students, both individually and collectively, can get involved in this activity and engagement in general.

The development process of this agreement has included various workshops, focus groups and feedback sessions with ECSA representatives, students and staff.

This agreement does not replace other strategic documents, and students are not limited by this document – students are actively encouraged to tell ECSA and the College how they can make students’ education better in any way. It has been established to promote an understanding of the developing relationship between ECSA and the College and to reinforce and enhance the College’s commitment to student engagement and the student voice.

### **Our community**

Edinburgh College’s strategic plan “Working together with students and staff to deliver a prosperous economy” lays out how the College has been working to establish a shared vision and goals for the whole college community. It has specific mission statements to be:

- A College where Students come first, the curriculum meets the needs of the economy and there is a continuing commitment to high academic standards and excellence in learning and teaching.
- A regional college group that enables the widest possible range of people to access learning that leads to individual employability and economically active communities.
- A college in which there is straight forward two way communication which is consistent, respectful and honest with a united and skilled staff that works and speaks with one voice.

These are linked to some of the strategy’s key aims which the Partnership Agreement aims to support:

- Educating for the future
  - Valuing our people
  - Understanding our core purpose
- i

In addition the following strategic messages are also central to the context of the Partnership Agreement:

- Achieving a positive destination for every student
- Shaping an innovative Edinburgh College culture

The student body is central to the above mission statements. Students at Edinburgh College are represented collectively by ECSA. ECSA represents the views and interests of all students to the College and other decision makers, and works in partnership with the College to secure the best possible student experience.

Find out more at <http://www.ecsaonline.co.uk>



## What is Partnership and why do we have one?

The terms 'partner' and 'partnership' are used in a broad sense to indicate joint working between students and staff.

Partnership working is based on the values of:

- openness
- trust and honesty
- agreed shared goals and values
- regular and robust communication between the partners

It is not based on the legal concept of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership working recognises that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned. The terms reflect a mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff.

Working in partnership will also enable to the College and ECSA to meet the central aims of the College's "Student Engagement Strategy"

- All Students feel part of a supportive institution
- All Students are engaged in their own learning
- Students will work with the College in shaping the direction of learning:
- Formal mechanisms for quality and governance will be developed.
- The College will seek to influence the development of the student experience at a national level

This Partnership Agreement comprises two sections. Part A outlines all the ways students can get involved in ECSA's and the College's structures to make a change within the College. It shows students how they can get involved with the quality processes and bring together all the different ways students can engage in their own learning.

Part B details the annual priorities that have been agreed between the College and ECSA. This Agreement will be aligned with the ECSA "Plan of Work" and the College's "Outcome Agreement."

Find out more at <http://www.ecsaonline.co.uk>

# Part A

## Student representation

Edinburgh College recognises the importance of students being involved in decisions at all levels of the College and making sure all students have the best experience possible. The College and ECSA will work together to ensure:

- That students are represented by a students' association representative on all committees.
- That student representatives are supported in their work on these committees and able to represent students' views and interests effectively.
- That every course has a class representative and a depute to make sure that students' views on their course, tutorials, or any other part of the College experience are listened to and acted upon by staff where necessary.
- All courses will have at least three Course Team Meetings a year which will include the class reps and deputies.

ii

Find out more at <http://www.ecsaonline.co.uk>

## Students shaping life at the College

Student involvement in decision-making is key to creating the best possible student experience. At Edinburgh College there are lots of ways that students can help shape College life. These include:

- Standing for election as a member of the ECSA Executive (paid full-time or voluntary roles within the Association).
- Standing for election as a Class Representative.
- Speaking to their Lecturer, Program Manager or LDT directly
- Giving honest, constructive feedback by taking part in feedback surveys, focus groups, and other feedback processes which are available.
- Using these same mechanisms to suggest solutions to any problems you may have experienced.
- Sharing their opinion with their course representative.
- Taking a motion to the SRC.
- Becoming a Student Reviewer
- Becoming a Communications Ambassador

## Part B

In response to both student feedback and the desire to further progress existing initiatives the College and ECSA agree, on behalf of the wider community, to work together on a number of topics as outlined below:

### Student Reviews

ECSA and the College agree to implement a programme of Student Reviews as part of the College commitment to continuously improve the quality of the student experience. Student Reviews will involve students in the life and work of the college and provide an additional mechanism to have their views heard.

**Process:** ECSA will recruit eight students to act as Student Reviewers across all campuses and the Quality Enhancement Team will train the Student Reviewers to gather information from students using an agreed set of questions relating to a selected aspect of the student experience. The Quality Enhancement Team will support the Student Reviewers to write a brief report on the responses given by interviewees and this report will be shared with the relevant staff team who will use the information to inform their evaluation of the student experience and their actions to improve it.

### Student Services

ECSA and the College agree to review all appropriate information and policies relating to Student Support to ensure that students have access to information that is assessable, up to date and relevant.

**Process:** A working group will be formed from members of the College and ECSA. They will conduct an audit of all the information available to students from a variety of sources e.g. website, paper based, student portal, Moodle, LDTs Student Services staff etc, and evaluate from a student point of view. They will also look at all policies relating to financial student support and consider application turnover. They will then identify gaps and areas for improvement and in partnership agree an action plan, identifying 6 priority areas.

### Care Leavers and Carers

ECSA and the College agree to analyse and improve the experience of student Care Leavers and Carers to ensure that they have the same opportunities to succeed as all other students.

**Process:** ECSA and the College agree to sign “Who Cares? Scotland’s” Listen pledge and to form a working group to identify any improvements that can be made to Care Leavers’ student experience. They will look at the entire Care Leaver journey from pre-entry and summer school to exit. They will work in partnership with the College to monitor progress against the action plan for the Buttle UK Quality mark and to ensure action to maintain the award. They will also work with “Colleges’ Scotland” and the “Edinburgh Young Carers Project” in examining student Carers experiences.

### Mental Health strategy

ECSA and the College agree to investigate ways of enhancing the current Mental Health services available at Edinburgh College and to improve them.

**Process:** ECSA and the College agree to map all out information and support available to students regarding their mental health, ensure it is accessible from the beginning to the end of the student journey, identify any gaps and act on them accordingly. They will explore examples of best practice

at other institutions, including a partnership model with Edinburgh University to develop a counselling service, and consider their viability in the context of Edinburgh College.

# College Outcome Agreement

ECSCA and the College have also worked together on the College's Outcome Agreement and drawn up specific measures, chosen based on feedback and discussions with students, on the following themes that both will take responsibility for improving. Exact targets and measures can be found in

<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Equality</b>
<i>iii Number of class reps recruited</i>	<i>viii Number of EIA involvements</i>
<i>iv Number of class reps trained</i>	<i>ix Number of women enrolled onto Construction and Engineering courses</i>
<i>Involvement in programme area self-evaluations)</i>	<b>Communication</b>
<b>Student Satisfaction</b>	<i>x Key college documents to be accessible to all students</i>
<b>Induction</b>	<i>xi Student use of Moodle</i>
<i>v I was given all the information I needed about the support available to me</i>	<b>Learning &amp; Teaching</b>
<i>vi All students are treated fair and equally</i>	<i>Implement 'co-creation' Project</i>
<i>vii I feel safe at College</i>	<i>I feel motivated to take part in lessons</i>
<b>Exit</b>	<i>I feel I can influence the planning and delivery of subjects in the course</i>
<i>Class reps have made a real difference</i>	
<i>ECSCA has really supported me and my learning</i>	
<i>Student Association has helped me</i>	

the Outcome Agreement itself.

## Overall

Edinburgh College and ECSA also agree to work together to investigate and address any issues arising from student feedback as required throughout the year. Edinburgh College agrees to ensure that ECSA has the support required to fulfil their role, and ECSA agrees to fulfil this role, making the student voice heard.

Signed Chair of Board

Signed ECSA President

