



Edinburgh College  
**Students'**  
**Association**

# End of Year Report

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**2016-17**

Edinburgh College Students' Association  
Charity Number SC028544

## Foreword from the President

Coming to the end of my first year as President, it gives me great pleasure to present to the Board our End of Year Report.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Board for its support throughout the year and hope that this strong relationship will continue into my second year of office, and beyond.

At ECSA, we have continued to promote the student voice in the college at all levels and in all facets of the student experience. By having a strong, structured Class Rep system this year, our work has had purpose, and using senior management to close that feedback loop during our conferences, has proved hugely effective. By doing this, the response from our student members has been of satisfaction in knowing their voice has truly been listened to and action is being taken.

Our success this year has been down to the hard work of the whole team, but also in working in partnership with the college. Picking up the Runners'-up award for Institutional Partnership at the Sparqs (Student Partnership in Quality Scotland) Conference, shows the distance travelled with ECSA working closely with College Departments over the last few years. With the development of the Partnership Agreement between ECSA and the college being renewed as we speak, this partnership working can only improve the student experience in the coming years.

A true compliment to the work carried out this year has to be the NUS Award for Scotland's College Students' Association of the Year. We took great pride in being nominated for three awards on the night and walking away with the top prize was a great achievement, which, of course, we shared with all Edinburgh College students.

The future is bright for ECSA and for its members, the new officer team are ready and raring to go and we would like to wish everyone an enjoyable summer break.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NBL'.

Neal Black  
President 2016-17

# Our Top 10 for 2016-17!

- 1. Communications Make-Over**  
New, purpose-built website linked to our online records system, making our communications more efficient and effective.
- 2. Digital integrated case work system**  
Established a new online casework system, tracking individual cases across campuses and gathering data patterns to take forward as part of our overall learner engagement framework.
- 3. Class Rep recruitment & management**  
Established a new online Class Rep registration system allowing for instant statistics and automatic confirmation for Class Reps of training registration, allowing Learning Development Tutors to register Class Reps during class time, without any additional paperwork.
- 4. Structured Class Rep engagement**  
Established thematic Class Rep Conferences on all 4 campuses ensuring, the issues being discussed by learners are linked to work in the wider quality & learner engagement agenda, supporting a more dynamic approach to data gathering and feedback.
- 5. Data-driven feedback**  
Reports to various College Committees are directly related to feedback gathered from students through themed Class Rep Conferences, online surveys, and casework, provided evidence-based opinion.
- 6. Healthy Body, Healthy Mind**  
Delivered a range of events, information and opportunities for students to be more aware of and improve their physical & mental health, as part of the NUS Scotland/Scottish Student Sport Healthy Body, Healthy Mind framework.
- 7. Sector Awards & Presentations**  
Short-listed for 5 National Awards at both sparqs & the National Union of Students annual awards events, winning the NUS Scotland College Students' Association of the Year and runner up in the sparqs institutional partnership award, as well as delivering presentation & workshops at national sector conferences on our award winning work.
- 8. Governance & Strategy**  
Recruitment & training of new members of our Board of Trustees, which has worked with students, external trustees and full-time officers to create ECSA's new Strategic Plan for 2017-20.
- 9. ECSA-llence Awards**  
Expansion of the ECSA-llence Awards, recognising the very best of learning & teaching across the College, leading to more than 730 nominations from students recognising their lecturers, instructors and Learning Development Tutors.
- 10. Improving the whole Student environment**  
As part of the focus on retention of students, ECSA has worked with a range of departments across the College to improve the student environment, outside of the classroom, from home to campus and back again, including travel, social spaces, catering and social activities.

# Our Top 10 for 2016-17!

## 1. Communications makeover

In Autumn 2016, we launched our new, purpose-built website [www.ecsa.scot](http://www.ecsa.scot). This has been the central point of our digitisation and streamlining of our activities this year, essentially, merging 7 different systems into 1.

One of the major advancements has been that every interaction with students is now all recorded in the one place, meaning that we are better placed to assess the types of students who are engaging with us, how often they engage and if students are engaging with us multiple times for different events or services. This means that we can use the data to better target our communications to specific sections of the student population, or promote events to students who may have registered for events with us in the past. We have also worked closely with the College Communications Department to ensure that important College messages are communicated to the right students at the right time, making use of online, e-mail and text messaging systems.



We have used this new system to great effect throughout this year and the more targeted approach has made our communications more efficient and effective.

## 2. Digital integrated case work system

This year, we have established a new online casework system, integrated into our website. For the first time, we are able to track individual cases across campuses and update records as we go, establishing alerts, reminders and automatically generated e-mails to support our ongoing development and professionalisation.

The case recording system has given us the opportunity to gather crucial data patterns which we have been able to react to much quicker than previous manual systems. Data is then used to take forward as part of our overall Learner Engagement Framework, ensuring the College is aware of ongoing issues and can deal with them in 'real time' rather than receiving reports retrospectively.



This has been a core part of how we support students through complex challenges and has acted as a pillar of our work around retaining students at Edinburgh College.

### 3. Class Rep recruitment & management

ECSA created a timeline for class rep engagement which included building on the class rep talks from the previous academic years. This consisted of 6 ECSA staff member delivering around 350 class rep talks coordinating through LDT's. These talks highlighted to students who ECSA were and gave more details around the class rep system and encouraged students to stand to be a class rep. This happened in week 3 & 4 of term time.

LDT's had until the end of week 6 to register class reps through an online registration form. This simultaneously registered a student as a rep in our database and signed them up to their preferred class rep training slot from the 10 sessions made available. The benefit of this integrated systematic approach meant that training couldn't be oversubscribed because the events updated automatically with participant registration. It gave ECSA clear information on class reps without information duplication. It removed a large amount of administration strain for ECSA and LDT's in comparison to other years. It is also led to a recruitment of 550 class reps. Equally it provided us with a list of which classes did and did not have reps allowing us to work with curriculum teams to fill the gaps where possible.



### 4. Structured Class Rep engagement

ECSA reshaped its class rep events to be more focussed and engaging for reps, each conference centred on a specific theme. The 4 themes for the year were: Retention, ECSA Values, Evaluation & finally Success & Progression. The conferences followed a format of a short update from the officers on their recent work and any upcoming activities that students should be aware of such as elections & events. Then there would be a workshop session in which reps would lead the discussions around the theme of the conference followed by providing feedback as a group in which ECSA would note the issues raised. Students would be encouraged to develop solutions to these issues where possible at the meetings. Finally there would be time at the end for students to pick up individual issues within their course on a one to one basis with ECSA staff.

Following on from the conferences ECSA produced a range of reports for differing groups including SMG, Trustees & even students. The data drawn from these conferences inferred much of the work for the year. From the 5 key student issues which led to organisational change for Edinburgh College to the values within the ECSA Strategic Plan being an almost identical mirror of what students wanted to see from ECSA. This new approach to conferences has driven up a more sustained attendance across the year. A real highlight has also been the growth in participation. Meetings are more dynamic and engaging and class reps are becoming more aware of the role they play within the college as we close the feedback loop following on from the conferences.



## 5. Data-driven feedback

ECSA's new approach to engaging with reps & students in general has led to a positive increase in our consultation with the student body. The new website and CRM system has allowed ECSA to launch targeted surveys based on information held on students.

This year ECSA has produced several surveys these include: Why students drop out, Catering, Travel, 'Where's your Head at?' (Mental Health) & a class rep evaluation.

These surveys have helped us 'take the temperature' of the student body across the 4 campuses. Segmenting data to better understand the issues facing specific groups within the college. These surveys coupled with the more formal reports produced by ECSA following on from class rep conferences have provided ECSA and the college with a real breadth of data that have led both groups to make informed decisions regarding the student experience. Moving away from being a reactive organisation, ECSA are now able to make evidence-based arguments when it takes its campaigns locally to the college or even nationally when engaging on work around funding. This helps ECSA serve its members more effectively and win for its students. As evidenced by the many other wins that have been secured this year. The continued professionalisation of ECSA coupled with evidence is a key part of ECSA's success.



The Full-time Officers have presented to numerous college committees and staff teams over the year, building essential working partnerships and showing the regard staff have for ECSA as a team.

## 6. Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

Through the academic year, ECSA delivered a range of events, information and opportunities for students to be more aware of and improve their physical & mental health. This was part of the NUS Scotland/Scottish Student Sport (SSS) Healthy Body, Healthy Mind (HBHM) Award framework and resulted in the submission of a final report totalling more than 100 pages.

All of our Full-Time Officers and Staff went through a 12hr Mental Health First Aid Course in a joint project with the University of Strathclyde Students' Association. In return, we worked with some of our dentistry students to create a poster campaign on the impact of fizzy drinks on dental health. It is thought that this is the first collaborative project of its kind across Scotland in the HBHM Award Scheme.



Some of the other highlights of this project included the delivery of health & wellbeing fairs on each campus, involving internal and external stakeholders, the development of a smoking cessation campaign, and a sports & activities day for students based at the Forthside Campus. We will find out what level we will be awarded at the annual SSS Conference held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2017.

## 7. Sector Awards & Presentations

In 2016, we were delighted to have been awarded the NUS Scotland Education Award for the development of our Learner Engagement Framework. This gave us the platform to share our experiences with colleagues across the sector at both sparqs and NUS Scotland Conferences. The feedback we have received from other institutions (Colleges and Universities) is that the work we are doing on engaging with students, particularly at a Class Rep level, is more developed than most Students' Associations in the country.

Furthermore, we were short-listed for 5 National Awards at both sparqs & the National Union of Students annual awards events in 2017. We were awarded the NUS Scotland College Students' Association of the Year 2017 and were runners up in the sparqs Institutional Partnership Award for the work we have done in partnership with the college on the Learner Engagement Framework.



## 8. Governance & Strategy

This year, we have concentrated on establishing a robust Board of Trustees to help further develop the Association as a strong and effective representative organisation. This has meant the recruitment, development & training of both external Trustees as well as student Trustees, sitting alongside our elected Full-Time Officers.

The Board has met on 6 occasions this academic year, looking at a range of policies and papers from the restricting of Full-Time Officer training to a competency framework for our staff. However, the major output for this year's Board has been the development and delivery of a new Strategic Plan for ECSA, including establishing our values and vision for the future.



Recruitment & training of new members of our Board of Trustees, which has worked with students, external trustees and full-time officers to create ECSA's new Strategic Plan for 2017-20.



## 9. ECSA-llence Awards

In the second semester, we sought to further develop the ECSA-llence Awards, which were established last academic year. These Student-Led Teaching Awards have proved extremely popular with students who want to take the time to recognise the great work that goes on in classrooms across the College. The categories this year included:

- Outstanding Lecturer of the Year Award
- Innovation in the Classroom Award
- Feedback Award
- Guiding Hand Award
- Class Rep of the Year Award

In its first year we received 230 nominations and this year, we have massively increased the engagement with students, leading to more than 730 nominations recognising lecturers, instructors and Learning Development Tutors across the College. The culmination of the project was the Awards event itself, held at Sighthill Campus and attended by more than 100 staff, reflecting on the very best of learning & teaching at Edinburgh College.



## 10. Improving the whole Student environment

As part of the focus on retention of students, ECSA has worked with a range of departments across the College to improve the student environment, outside of the classroom. This is an ongoing project, but already, we have seen some great advances in interaction from students in this area. The idea is that we work to improve the whole student environment from when a student leaves their home, to when they return. This has included travel, on-campus social spaces, catering and social activities.

We have worked closely with the College Facilities team on influencing local bus operators to re-establish the term-time bus pass option for students as well as supporting the Midlothian travel research project. We have also worked in partnership with catering to help shape menus and options for students eating on campus, from a new 'grab & go' range to hot food options, led by student opinion.



One of our most successful initiatives has been the development of social spaces on campuses, with table tennis tables installed at 3 campuses and one-off sports/physical activity days run throughout the year at all 4 campuses, engaging students in alternative activities, throughout their working day and giving them a sense of community on campus.



# Thank you!

On behalf of everyone involved in ECSA, we would like to thank the huge amount of wonderful people who have contributed to another successful year - colleagues from across the institution including teaching staff, support staff, the leadership team and not least the Board of Management itself. We are grateful and enthused by your ongoing support and want to say a huge thanks for working in partnership with ECSA throughout the year.

To our partners out-with the College, we have had some pretty amazing initiatives, events and support over the past 12 months. We have worked very closely with organisations such as NUS Scotland, sparqs, LGBT Youth Scotland, Scottish Student Sport, and Crew 2000. For an organisation as small as ECSA, these links are invaluable and help us to continue to punch above our weight as a developing College Students' Association and for this, we say thanks.

Finally, we have to save the biggest thanks to our phenomenal students. Some have got heavily involved in volunteering with us, being Class Reps, Executive Officers and even running for election to help their fellow students. Some have helped run events and campaigns, some have participated in focus groups, workshops or interacted with us on stalls throughout the year. They are the reason we're all here and we are very proud of every one of them.

The ECSA Team are excited to see what 2017-18 brings and hopes to continue to do everyone proud in the months to come as we set about work on the implementation of our new Strategic Plan.



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