



Edinburgh College

**Students'**  
**Association**

# Annual Report

## 2020/2021

**A year like no other**

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# President's Introduction



Well, what a year that was, a year like no other!

As President of the Students' Association, I am so proud of how ECSA has not only faced the many unpredictable challenges the last

12 months has thrown at us, but, as a team, I believe we have thrived. The last year has allowed us to adapt and revolutionise the way we work, which will have a lasting influence in the years to come. So, this year has been an incredibly rewarding experience, all in all, despite the challenges we have collectively faced.

Similar to last year's report, we will highlight the progress on our priority objectives throughout and how it has fed into and complemented ECSA's core strategic aims. However, with the continued restrictions in response to the multiple new variants of COVID-19 that have emerged since July last year, we have had to adapt certain objectives to reflect the limitations of our presence on campuses.

Despite the constant changes to the academic year, I, as President, could not be more proud of the work and achievements ECSA have made throughout the last 12 months. From supporting students with their introductions to the College, to our events to promote equality, building new ways to interact with students, and supporting students through this very different student experience the past year has been. However, I would have to say our crowning achievement this year has been our ability to not only represent our members' voices, but to go on and feed their concerns, feelings and views into the larger discussions happening both within the College and at the national level across the College sector.

*"The team at ECSA have been truly invaluable members this year, leading the way in representing students in a virtual setting, shining a light on issues students are facing weeks in advance of them becoming*

*national issues, while also helping frame the conversations around how to find the resolutions that work in the students' best interests."*

*Matt Crilly, NUS Scotland President*

It would be no understatement to say that for another year, ECSA has been truly sector-leading in what we do and the way we do it. Our externally-funded work on sustainability is absolutely unique to the sector, and our Go Green team's ability to deliver their objectives in new and different ways has been an inspiration; delivering dozens of climate education workshops directly to classes through Microsoft Teams, creating a new online clothing Swapshop, and even getting those students who could never have afforded it free bikes and safety kits to get them on their active travel journeys.

In addition, our innovation and utilisation of our online tools and spaces has proved invaluable as we continue to foster a sense of community and connection in a remote world. Our virtual campus has truly become its own hub for students to reach out to each other, voice their concerns & opinions, and share news & updates to a much larger audience than we would have been able to in previous years.

As a team, we are incredibly proud of our work over the past year, but underpinning all our accomplishments has been partnerships; the partnerships with our members - the students, the various departments within the College, the senior managers, as well as a range of external organisations. This year has shown how crucial these ongoing partnerships are, as, without any one of them, we would not have the same level of success we have had over the past academic year.

I want to thank the Board of Management for all the ongoing support it has shown ECSA this year. Working with our partners to develop a positive and continually improving student experience in a virtual setting has been central to the successes of our members, which we have outlined in this report, and continues to be our core task.



# Our top 10 of 2020/2021

## Virtual Campus

Again this year, our virtual campus group has been vital for engaging with students online.

- 2400 members
- 1741 posts
- 10,646 comments



## Equalities events

- We held our first ever Black History Month stream with over 1100 views.
- £241 raised for LGBT Youth Scotland by LGBT Activity Month participants
- Student-led “I am me” campaign launched for Care Day

## Livestreams

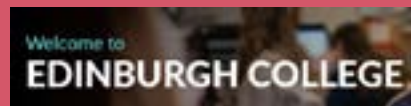
We set out to engage students through live video, and achieved a marked increase in engagement:

- 812 live viewers
- 8897 mins viewed (up 45% on-year)

## Induction events

We worked with the college’s communications team to co-design a series of events to welcome students, delivered fully-online.

- 2318 watched live
- Over 500 on catch-up
- 340 questions responded to



## Class Reps online

- 564 Reps registered
- 240 Trained live
- 381 enrolled on the online Moodle training
- 441 attendees across 4 conferences, an average of 110 students



## Resolving funding

- Supported over 170 students with funding cases, an increase of 2329%
- Represented on Student Experience ‘Lean’ project to review and improve funding and induction processes

## The Great Big Student Thank You

This year we re-factored our annual teaching awards to instead pay thanks to lecturers, classmates, LDTs, and other staff in the college who’ve made an impact

## Go Green project

- Climate Change and Sustainability workshops delivered to 26 different classes
- 10 zero-waste cooking videos produced with over 1400 views
- Almost 110kg of donations to our Swap Shop



## Influencing decisions

- Lobbying through NUS won SFC Funding for new ECSA staff member
- Additional discretionary funds for students affected by covid
- Campaigning for summer funding support for students



## Joint working

- Livestreams with the Principal to directly respond to student concerns
- Working with HWSS faculty to ensure that students with required placements get the time on the job they need
- One-off £300 advance payments to students affected by the funding crisis

# Education & Representation

## Class Reps

Throughout 2020/21, for the first time ever, all Class Rep activities took place online, including Class Rep registration, training and conferences, with all activities hosted on MS Teams. Despite the challenging circumstances we have been pleased to see an increase in student engagement throughout the year.

Class Rep recruitment took place directly in the classroom with a [pre-recorded video of President, Jordan Wyllie](#), available for staff to show students ahead of the Class Rep elections. Once elected and registered, students were automatically added to the Class Rep Teams site as well as automatically receiving an email for them to sign up to online training. The Class Rep training was successfully delivered online through a combination of a Moodle training module as well as a 1-hour live training session on Teams. Class Reps have been hugely positive about their experiences of Class Rep training and with it being delivered online, the flexibility for students to sign up and attend when it suited them offered the opportunity for even more Class Reps receiving training. Students were offered training sessions during the day as well as a couple of evening sessions (7pm) to cater to students with other commitments. These evening sessions were popular and informed some of our planning regarding Class Rep Conferences for the year. All Class Reps have also had access to the online [Class Rep Handbook](#), which has tips for staying well while learning online as well as how to address any student concerns.

Despite moving activities online, we delivered all 4 Class Rep Conferences to an increased number of students. 441 students attended across 4 Class Rep Conferences compared to 250 the year before. Each conference was hosted twice, one at lunch time and one late afternoon, to ensure as many students could attend as possible. The Class Rep Conferences were themed around the student journey, specifically focusing on the online learning experience. Vital to the success of the online conferences were

the engagement tools used. We pride ourselves in gathering evidence-based feedback and we have continued to do so online. Students are invited to contribute via the microphone or the chat, but also through structured feedback tools such as webforms on our website. For all Class Rep Conferences we utilised online engagement tools to stimulate engagement and interaction, for example Padlet and Mentimeter. Both tools were hugely popular with students as they can engage in the activities while also providing feedback - it leads to a more coherent and live experience for everyone involved. The tools also allow us to gather further feedback and take the temperature about specific areas of work without surveying students as such.

Theme	Attendance
Induction & Retention	184 students
Course handbooks and online good practice	109 students
Student experience and student rights	89 students
Success & Progression + Class Rep feedback	59 students

In addition to scheduled Class Rep activities such as training and conferences, Class Reps are also invited to take part in focus groups and consultations. These students are well placed to engage in these as they have received thorough training in providing constructive feedback and are used to speaking about their student experience. We are pleased to have supported students to take part in regular focus groups with SQA, Education Scotland and Royal Society of Edinburgh as well as internal student experience groups.

## Class Reps in numbers:

- 564 Reps registered
- 520 on Teams site
- 240 Trained live
- 381 Class Reps enrolled to the online Moodle training
- 4 Class Rep Conferences

- 4 Class Rep Conference Reports
- 441 attendees across 4 Class Rep Conferences, an average of 110 students

All Class Rep reports for 2020/21 can be found [on our website here](#).

## Identifying student issues and solutions

The success of online Class Reps has supported the identification of student issues and concerns. Understandably, this year has been difficult for many students and there have been concerns along the way. Fortunately, through the success of our online student engagement, we have supported students to provide further feedback and address concerns to support retention and success.

Throughout the year, we have identified student issues as they arose through engaging with students on the Class Rep Teams site, the all-student Virtual Campus, the virtual drop-in and through the Full-Time Officers. It is vital to note that, even though this academic year has been focused on issues relating to studying from home and learning during a pandemic, the student concerns raised in a 'normal' year are still the same. Students are still living in poverty, struggling to get adequate mental health support and housing. The difference is that bigger crises were at the top of the list this year.



Hearing directly from students has been instrumental in being able to respond as well as being proactive about any arising concerns. In semester 1 we saw and heard reports of student funding delays leading to many students struggling. Full-Time Officers worked closely with

the Advice and Support Coordinator to manage student queries and ensure correct guidance and sign-posting was utilised. As this was a wider issue a regular group was set up between ECSA and Student Experience to support a solution. A resolution was found through a partnership approach and was communicated through a livestream with funding and guidance staff available to answer queries. For more details about casework and the incredible work of our Advice and Support Coordinator, [see here](#).

Unique to this extraordinary year has been student concerns around on-campus activities and ability to go on placements necessary to complete a course. Class Reps were specifically key in highlighting concerns as well as students getting in touch directly for support. In both cases, the Virtual Campus and Class Rep spaces have been useful to gather information and feedback about student concerns making it possible for us to bring this straight to the relevant partners for resolution. Regarding placements, President Jordan, communicated the concerns of students directly to department heads and arranged for further communication and reassurances to be brought to students leading to his regular involvement in the College placement working group.

We are proud to be able to work with partners, internally and externally to come to solutions and improved experiences for Edinburgh College students. While it wasn't possible to work around the need for students to come onto campus to complete closed book assessments, students were able to voice their concerns and suggest ways of making them feel safer on campus leading to a video guiding students through [what to expect when coming onto campus](#).

Part of the Priority Objectives set out by the Full-Time Officers were about improving information for students, empowering them to engage further in their own learning journey. This has included consulting students on their experience and expectations of course handbooks as well as exploring ways of incorporating this onto Moodle in partnership with the Moodle Team, ensuring the information is clearly accessible and visible. Students were keen to have more information generally, but specifically having access to information when they need it, online was

high on their list (e.g. timetables, assessment schedules, referencing guidance, etc.). We continue to work with the relevant departments to identify areas of good practice as well as areas to improve the information supplied to students. The hope is that all students will have easy access to staff contact information, key deadlines, student policies, absence forms and importantly information about their course and assessments.

## External/National Campaigns and issues

The Full-Time Officers were elected in March 2020, and the following week campuses were shut and we were told to stay at home. Here we are, more than a year later, and it is clear that one of the strengths of this officer team has been to work with other officers nationally. President, Jordan and VP Welfare, Rose, have regularly attended NUS Scotland officer meetings with the purpose of highlighting student issues, as well as support national campaigns. They have been imperative in raising issues such as student work placements, assessments, and the impacts of industrial action taken by EIS.



As a result of national student campaigns, the Scottish Funding Council announced funding for Students' Associations across Scotland. This funding is life-changing for many SA's and will be used to further wellbeing support as well as offer

more opportunities for students to engage with their student experience. At ECSA, this additional funding will cover a fixed-term staff member to support student activities and groups, focusing on delivering these online and transitioning students back to in-person events. This is a welcome addition to a team of 4 core staff members (+2 CCF funded project staff).

Alongside the successful campaign for further funding for SA's, the Scottish Funding Council also announced additional funding for the discretionary fund. This came as a result of student officers relaying student concerns and experiences straight to NUS Scotland who lobbied the Scottish Government. Students have been unfairly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and this additional discretionary funding will ensure students have a fairer chance of success without going into poverty or debt.

The Scottish Funding Council is currently doing a review of coherent provision and sustainability of education with a number of workstreams relating to supporting students through COVID-19, but also what education will look like after the pandemic. The Full-Time Officers have been involved in review meetings with other student officers to ensuring a clear student voice in the reviews and will continue to engage in the process as it progresses.

Once again, the student learning experience has been disrupted due to lengthy industrial action, leading to student anxiety and confusion. Through the excellent student engagement tools used throughout the year, students were able to receive direct information about the strikes, the context and any negotiations and resolutions. Students were understandably frustrated as the strike days affected valuable online learning and assessments, leading to even further delays in a most difficult year. The frustration showed through student engagement, both at Class Rep Conferences and on the Virtual Campus where the main topic discussed was industrial action. ECSA took a lead in making sure we found out the most up to date information and supported students to understand how it would impact them. Although we could not resolve the issues, the work we did on facilitating communication between students and the College was vital in reassuring many who would otherwise not have



coped with the stressful situation.

Ahead of the Scottish Elections, ECSA ran a campaign urging students to register to vote involving social media and Class Rep Conference content. This is increasingly important as students tend to move regularly. To influence Scottish Election candidates, the Full-Time Officers worked collaboratively with NUS Scotland to create [the Student Guarantee](#), a pledge for candidates to sign up to, showing their commitment to secure the rights of students and a plan to rebuild a fairer education system. VP Welfare, Rose, took part in the [accompanying video campaign](#) as well as encouraging students to sign the student guarantee and email their local candidates. Finally, to ensure students were front and centre in the Scottish Elections, NUS Scotland hosted online hustings which we invited students to watch as part of a watch party on the Virtual Campus. This sparked conversation about strikes and student funding which the Full-Time Officers were able to engage with positively.

### Student Engagement

This year we have continued our sector-leading student engagement work. In a year like no other, the ways of engaging with students have changed. ECSA adapted quickly and from the very outset of the initial lockdown, a Virtual Campus was set up for students to interact with each other. There are many other ways we have kept up with students though.

The Virtual Campus has been instrumental in continuing to engage with students in real time. This isn't just a feed for ECSA to share information hoping students will read it. The Virtual Campus is much more about students posting and sharing their experiences and



helping out their student colleagues by answering their queries. To gather student opinion we have used polls on the Virtual Campus to great success. This has been helpful to replicate some of the casual student conversations we would have on campus. Being able to use the Virtual Campus as a sounding board has proved incredibly useful, especially at times such as strikes or during funding delays.

While the Virtual Campus is useful for students to interact, it has also been instrumental in ensuring clear communication to all students. Evidently, during the EIS industrial action in March and April, students were often confused and uncertain about classes and why they were facing disruption. Being able to share documents and updates directly onto the Virtual Campus often meant students would hear within minutes of announcements coming from Colleges Scotland or EIS. Any questions were also brought directly from students to relevant groups through the Full-Time Officers. We believe that without this way of communicating, students would have fallen off the radar during industrial action and it is an important lesson, that regular messaging and interaction often is preferred, even if there's no immediate change.

MS Teams has mainly been utilised for engaging with Class Reps, but has also been a base for other projects and activities such as Wellbeing Wednesday and Chat 'n That. By having dedicated Teams, students have been able to set up chats, calls and posts whenever they want to. This has been especially successful in the Chat 'n That group where students come together just for a chat either on a call or through messages.

When engaging with Class Reps, Teams has been invaluable. All Class Rep Conferences and training sessions have been delivered through Teams, with students automatically added to the site as they are registered as Class Reps. Being able to send out reminders through the site has increased engagement with the Class Rep Conferences, but the format of the calls have also supported further students to take part, being able to use either voice or writing, as well as tools such as Menti or Padlet.

Like the Virtual Campus, using Teams has been a direct channel between students and ECSA in

a way that students are already using for their learning. Similar to being on campus, if you are already on Teams as part of your learning, it is easy to nip over to a social Teams site to see if there's any news or good chat happening.

While survey fatigue is a real concern, we have continued to run our successful ['Your Experience' survey](#), available to all students, but aimed mainly at Class Reps. This survey was key in identifying early student concerns and it influenced the direction of ECSA projects for the rest of the year. Funding concerns as well as placement and deferral concerns came through clearly in this survey and they became some of the real themes for the year.

### Elections

Our [9th annual ECSA Full-Time Officer Elections](#) were successfully delivered entirely online despite the challenging circumstances. We saw 6 candidates standing for our 3 Full-Time posts who took an active part in a full week of online voting and campaigning. Voting took place over 5 days, with students casting their vote through our online voting system. Since the vast majority of students have not been on campus this semester, or even, this entire academic year, it has been an uncertain and very different process to deliver elections this year. However, we adapted how we promote the elections and how to engage students in the process.

For maximum engagement and exposure, the process to get students engaged with elections started early on, with elections featuring in the February Class Rep Conference as well as election information sessions and targeted election social media posts. Once nominations closed, candidates received a more comprehensive support experience as campaigning online can be challenging and new for most students. They received tips on running online campaigns, ideas on how to use social media and a short guide to public speaking. To give students the opportunity to hear directly from the candidates we hosted an online Candidate Question Time during voting week. Additionally, ECSA visited 42 classes directly to do Election Shout Outs, promoting the elections

and all candidates equally by showing their campaign videos.



### 2021 Election in numbers:

- 9th year of cross-campus ballot
- 3 full time posts
- 6 candidates
- 42 class shout outs
- 5 days of voting
- 1229 votes

# Advice & Support

The 2020-21 academic year saw yet again many changes in the types of cases and numbers we have dealt with. We've had to entirely manage our cases and walk-in queries online and as a result have had to adjust the way we record issues as well as interact with students and staff.

Student issues can be broken down into two main categories:

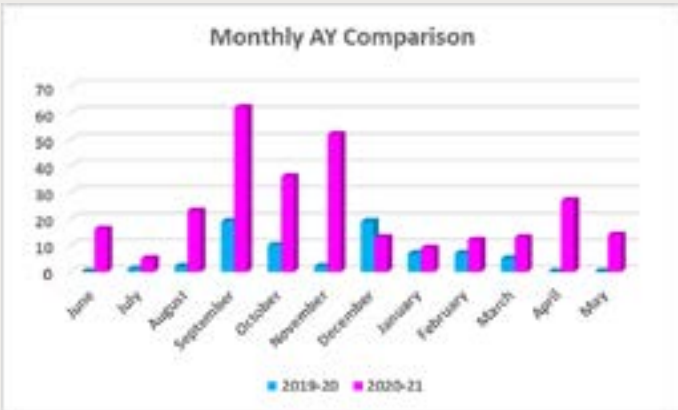
- Cases: require more time or investigation due to their complex or unusual nature or require input from many parties
- Talk-in enquiries; are run of the mill issues that this year have been solved in usually a solitary phone call, email or message, or video call

## Cases

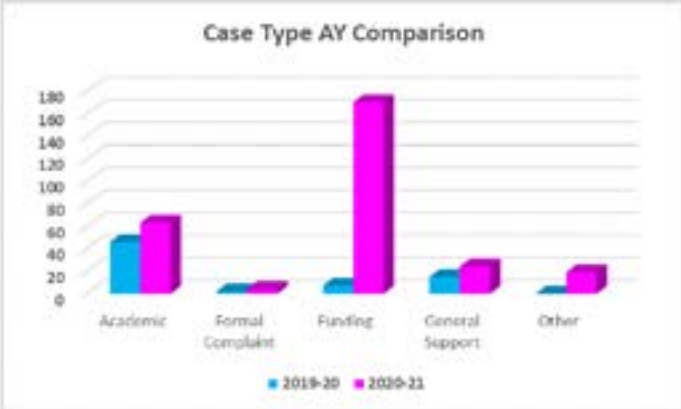
This year we have seen a huge 292% increase of recorded cases, compared to the same period last year. This is in large part due to the expected challenges faced when starting a new academic year in pandemic conditions, such as staff shortages due to furlough and illness, as well as the challenges faced by staff working at home alone.

ECSA has recorded 282 cases at the time of writing, although, by the time term ends, the numbers will most likely be slightly higher with students submitting academic appeals and progression issues.

## 2019/20 – 2020/21 Year Comparison



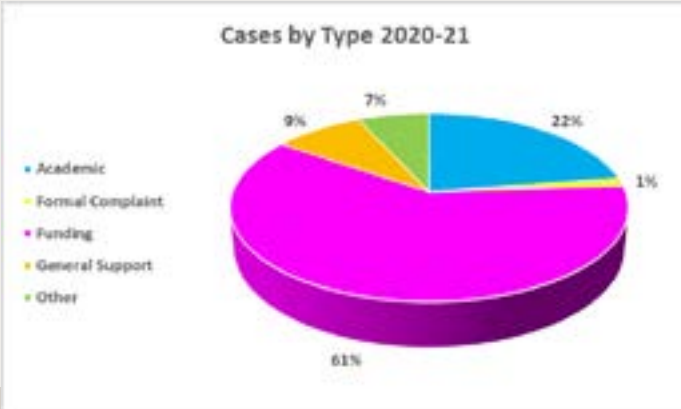
We've seen a massive increase in cases month by month, even in months that normally have little to no cases, with the exception of December, as can be seen in the graph. We can only guess that, as the College was solely online for much of the year, services and offices that students would normally assume were closed for holiday periods, were more visible and more easily accessible for online.



We have also seen a major swing in the most common type of cases we have dealt with this year from academic to funding. Most case types rose by 2 – 19 cases this year, opposed to the 2329% rise in funding cases, where we have seen the number balloon from 7 to 170 cases.

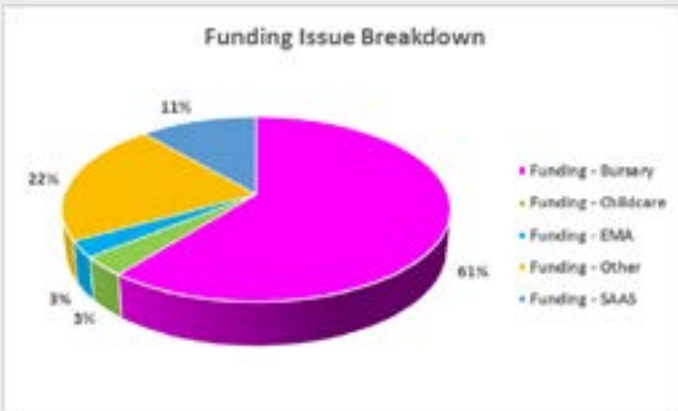
## Cases by Type

Funding cases accounted for 61% of all cases. Academic cases which include academic issues, academic appeals and disciplinaries accounted for 22% of the total. The remainder of cases were split between general support (eg. problems accessing College support services, homelessness, and other personal issues) other (eg. Timetabling and IT issues) and formal complaints; with 9%, 7% and 1% respectively.



## Funding Cases

There has been a massive rise in funding cases this year. Funding processes both in the College and externally have seen significant processing problems due to front-line staff being thrust into solo/remote working or roles unfamiliar to them. This mostly caused problems for students that had circumstances outwith the norm. This issue, although it had a terrible impact on the current cohort of Edinburgh College students, will have a beneficial impact for future students and the College itself, as it has highlighted where there is a need for staff training and improvement of resources, services, and processes.



College bursary funded students accounted for 61% of all funding cases, with the majority of students experiencing delays due to misinformation, processing issues or gathering evidence from external sources such as evidence of benefits ending.

The 'Funding – other' case type was the second most common issue for 22% of all cases this year, students with cases in this category are normally experiencing hardship due to a variety of factors, the main one usually reported as being ineligible for any type of FE funding. We did experience quite an increase in students reporting these issues, mainly due to these students losing or not being able to gain any employment in the midst of the pandemic. However, we are pleased to report that due to the relaxed eligibility criteria of the COVID-19 Winter fund, these students were able to get help and continue their studies, where normally they would have potentially faced withdrawal or extreme hardship.

## SAAS, EMA, and Childcare Funding

Students applying to SAAS accounted for 11% of funding cases. The main issues students faced were with the application form itself, whether this was EU students who have lived in Scotland for many years, applying for the EU students fee-only award or students not understanding the tick box options of living cost funding to apply for; this had a major impact on students as by the time they receive their award and realise it's wrong, they then have to submit evidence and wait many, many weeks for the correct funding such as student loan or bursary.

Childcare made up 3% of all cases and were often caused by delays due to evidence or timetable changes. EMA also accounted for 3% of funding cases, again this was mostly due to delays and confusion from Schools College Partnership students on who to speak to or how to get information on their application.

## Academic Cases

Academic issues can be further broken down into three categories; academic with 50 cases, disciplinary with 6 cases and academic appeals with 3 cases.

"Academic" issues mainly comprised of students having to undertake an extra year to sit assessments, placements or other things missed in academic year 2019-20 and this year; other cases cited issues with students feeling unsupported on their courses, progression issues and problems arising due to classroom management issues.

"Academic Appeals" comprised of students appealing estimated or inaccurate results from last academic year and "Disciplinary" comprised of cases where alleged inappropriate behaviour and academic malpractice were cited as reasons for disciplinary action.

## General Support Cases

The most common general support cases were students that were struggling to access or utilise a support resource or service both internally and externally, such as learning support, wellbeing,



student services and student status confirmation or student cards.

ECSA supported several students experiencing accommodation issues this year, with issues ranging from homelessness after a relationship breakdown to supporting a student to find accommodation and support with issues with their letting agents.

ECSA have also provided one to one emotional support to students who have not felt confident to access College or external support services themselves. The majority of these students have then went onto access external support or the College's wellbeing and counselling teams.

### Other Cases

"Other" can be broken down into estates, timetabling and IT issues. This year there have been no estates cases, however 15 students needed support for significant IT issues that prevented them from accessing their course. ECSA supported 4 cases involving timetabling issues, that included students who were given timetables from the rest of their class, timetable clashes with their childcare and were requesting support to move to another group with a different timetable and not receiving a timetable at all.

### Formal Complaint Cases

Four students have approached ECSA for advice and support to make a formal complaint; two of these complaints involved the significant funding delays experienced this year and two were complaints about their course.

### Common Themes through Cases

One of the most common themes throughout cases is communication. This doesn't just apply to the levels of communication the students receive through the College such as during the funding and application processes or having enough staff to answer queries in a timely manner.

It's also about how 'staff and staff' or 'staff and students' communicate with each other. This

issue can be applied across a plethora of cases that are brought to our attention; whether it's a highly distressed student that is having trouble communicating in a healthy way, having contact cut off or disciplinary action, instead of being referred to the wellbeing team; or staff being able to communicate professional and personal boundaries in a healthy way with other staff and students, leading to fatigue and burn-out that have a knock on effect in teaching and support. Whilst many of these circumstances are not uncommon, the issues have been magnified and exacerbated by remote working, with communication breakdowns going unresolved, rather than addressed at the time. We have seen how this has left all parties frustrated and alone, rather than being able to speak informally to resolve conflict as would likely have happened if staff and students spoke to each other in-person.

This year has highlighted a very real need for active-listening and trauma-informed practice training within all teams of the College, as the events over the past year have caused untold isolation and trauma in many students and staff.

As a College, thought must be given to how we can practice healthy communication and set boundaries in all areas of practice; whether that's how disciplinarys are handled, how we communicate our needs or boundaries with others.

### Talk-ins

We've recorded interactions with 640 students this academic year through our 'Talk-in' form and helped them with 885 individual issues. Although the new 'Talk-in' form has been used, it hasn't been used consistently during busier periods but can give a reflection of the types of common issues students were approaching ECSA for help with.



## Housing & Finance Survey

In December 2020 we ran our [Housing and Finance survey](#) through till the beginning of February in an identical format to the year 19/20, and plan to run the survey again in 21/22, as to give a clear insight into the housing and financial situations that students face through a year-on-year comparison.

It has been a common theme over the past few years that a student officer in each new team of sabbaticals has had some form of objective relating to student housing or finance.

By having this data recorded annually we can not only use it to help frame objectives in a much more targeted way, but also by having year on year analysis gives a clearer picture on how previous objectives have made an impact on the student body.



Some of the major talking points to come out of this year's survey are, while 42.1% of respondents stated that they are living at the family home with parents, 39.1% stated that they were currently living in private rented accommodation. When we look to the students' income, 70.1% of respondents stated that monthly they will earn less than £901.

Given the median rent costs for a 2 bedroom flat in Edinburgh is £1,050, students may be unable to live independently. If you couple that with the fact that mature students (over 21s) make up the largest cohort of the student body, this may indicate a much deeper issue and we will keep an eye on in next year's survey as COVID-19's impact may be a factor in some students having less income.

## Universal Credit / Benefits advice

This year the pandemic amplified the glaring problems students who claim Universal Credit face when applying for funding.

This can affect students in different ways depending on their level of study and individual circumstances:

FE students mostly face lengthy delays when waiting on confirmation of benefits ending after the start of their course

DWP/SSSA staff are unaware of FE Funding Policies and are therefore misadvising students

Students are often given or find general information, unspecific to their circumstances, which later causes confusion and often readjustments to their funding

It's important, that all organisations are agreed in the funding advice that they are providing and are aware of the challenges faced by students when transitioning from benefits to funding.

ECSA will continue to work together with the college to ensure that information available to students is of a high quality and hopes to meet with representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions and the Scottish Social Security Agency in the coming months to develop this work further. This year, we have developed [specific advice](#) to help make sure students understand the issues and we will continue to study the impacts of this next year to mitigate impacts.

### Homelessness priority objective

This year, one of the priority objectives was to set up a more focused support system for students facing homelessness. As we conducted research, it became apparent that we needed to adjust to ensure the end goal is achievable. However, there have been numerous setbacks to this objective as there are critical gaps in qualitative



and quantitative data. As such, it will be a project that is ongoing into the next academic year. This objective aims to develop a system that identifies the factors that have led to a student struggling with homelessness while maintaining user-friendliness to both staff and students. The design should be a simple procedure of a student/staff member filling in an online form, the purpose of these questions will act like a flow chart disseminating what core factors have been at play. Once these factors are identified, using a premade and regularly updated database, the user should then be directed to a list of organisations that provide wrap around support in that particular area with contact details for self-referral. President, Jordan, has been leading on this and has already amassed a network of contacts in local support organisations who are keen to work together to make sure students who are most at risk, don't slip through the net, but get the help they need, when they need it.

### Supporting Students

In a year where isolation and loneliness has been a real concern amongst our students, the activities and events we have focused on have been to alleviate some of those worries for students. Giving them different ways of interacting and minimising that isolation but leaving it up to them to engage when useful to their wellbeing.

With the support and inclusion of Class reps who showed an interest, we created a weekly online meeting space for students to share wellbeing/mental health tips. The "Wellbeing Wednesday" society has been held every Wednesday lunchtime or afternoon (depending on students time preferences) throughout the year via MS Teams and provided a slightly more relaxed space to talk about mental health and how we are all coping.

We also developed a new weekly event called "[Chat 'n' that](#)" which was a purely social online space for anyone to meet up with other students and chat. For some, a weekly online coffee break with other students was the most social contact they had, so this was vital in maintaining links and avoiding loneliness for those most isolated.



The Officers have also led on highlighting specific issues throughout the year, relating to mental health and isolation. For suicide awareness week, [our President wrote a blog](#) about his experiences and emotions relating to the subject, encouraging others to talk about it more openly. Our Vice President Welfare [wrote about her experiences of lockdown](#) and how she used open water swimming to clear her mind from the depression of the daily news conferences. Finally, our Vice President Activities encouraged students to connect with nature through gardening to battle the stress of the pandemic, linking up with the Go Green Team to giveaway free seeds and growing advice to students throughout [Mental Health Awareness Week 2021](#).



# Equality & Diversity

At ECSA we continue to champion equality and diversity through everything that we do. In 2020/21 we have delivered activities specifically to raise awareness, educate and engage students and staff with different minority groups. VP Welfare and VP Activities, Rose and Victoria, have worked closely with Edinburgh College Equalities Officer, Bethany Parsons, to strengthen the activities and knowledge of minority students and the support they need.

### Policies & Documents

A clear focus in the partnership with the Equalities Officer has been to get the basics right and ensure there is a base off which we can support and celebrate diversity. As the Full-Time Officers took office in July, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were high on their agenda and rightly so. The first task was an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement to make it clear the commitment ECSA has to championing equality, not just at Edinburgh College, but also beyond. An important part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement is that it is a live page with links to current events, activities and blogs. It also offers students the opportunity to feedback about their thoughts on the statement and their experience at Edinburgh College. Additionally, the page has direct links to support organisations that might be useful for students. You can see more on our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion page here](#).



Throughout the academic year ECSA and Equalities have met every 3 weeks to collaborate on projects and campaigns. As part of the work to update the College Equality Outcomes and

input into the Mainstreaming report, we hosted Equality Outcome consultations with Class Reps on Teams. This was a hugely successful exercise and provided the Equalities Officer with an opportunity to engage students directly about their experience of Equality & Diversity at Edinburgh College. Furthermore, VP Welfare Rose, has been heavily involved in the Equality Outcomes consultation through Board of Management and fully supports the approach to reporting on equalities.

Further partnership work is taking place as part of the LGBT Charter Award, where ECSA VP Welfare and Advice & Support Coordinator is involved as well as a couple of Class Reps. The charter working group is continuing to work towards award status which includes campaigns and changes to LGBT student reporting and policies. This is an exciting project, that we are pleased to continue to be a part of.

### Celebrating Diversity

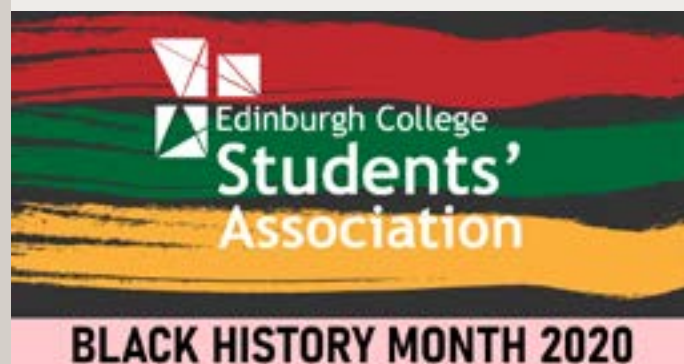
At ECSA we haven't just spent time talking about Equality and Diversity, we have also celebrated our diverse students and engaged them in activities throughout the year.



In October ECSA joined up with the Edinburgh College Equalities Officer to celebrate Black History Month. We asked students and staff to help us celebrate by contributing to our Black History Month recommendations list, which was launched later in the month. In addition to that, the full time officers Victoria and Rose partnered with colleagues across Edinburgh College to showcase work by black and minority ethnic



students. This included a recorded workshop about make up for black skin, a watch party of a documentary about the history of slavery in Scotland, a pre-recorded dance performance as well as a live conversation about navigating white spaces between VP Activities Victoria, former PASS student Kimberley and Ethelinda Lashley-Scott, Curriculum Manager. This was hugely popular and had 1114 viewers. You can check out the Black History Month recommendations and [watch the live conversation here](#).



For LGBT History Month in February ECSA hosted an activity challenge for students to get involved with supporting and raising awareness of LGBT History Month and the charity LGBT Youth Scotland. When students signed up to the challenge they were asked to share a story about someone who is their unsung hero, whether a friend, family member or someone they don't know. This fit in with the theme of LGBT History Month 2021; Unsung Heroes. You can see some of the unsung heroes students shared [here](#). 12 Students took part in the challenge and pledged a variety of different activities, with the majority walking everyday as well as students pledging to read for leisure, or complete a form of exercise every day. As part of the activity challenge, students were encouraged to ask for sponsorship from College staff, friends and family in order to fundraise for LGBT Youth Scotland. A total of £241 was raised directly to support the valuable work that LGBT Youth Scotland delivers.



At the end of February, we launched a new student-led campaign "I am Me!" in time for Care Day 2021. The campaign is dedicated to telling the story of students from all walks of life, who are all individuals with their own stories worth telling. As it was launched on Care Day, the first student stories were from two students who grew up in care. Further student stories will be shared in the coming academic year but for now you can read more about the campaign and their stories [here](#).

To mark International Women's Day ECSA and Equalities hosted Women's Hour on MS Teams, an informal gathering for students to get together with other women. 17 students attended Women's Hour and resulted in students getting further involved with the Facebook Women's group, where they have continued the conversation.

For Deaf Awareness Week, we teamed up with Fife College Students' Association. Deaf Awareness Week 2021 focussed on 'coming through it together' and in that spirit we have worked in partnership with both Edinburgh College Equality Officer and Fife College Students' Association to create some content, allowing deaf students to lead the conversation.

Fife student Talli had a conversation with Jade, VP Welfare of Fife College to talk about all the things not to say to a deaf person. They recorded their conversation and we promoted it on our website and our social media channels alongside short videos teaching simple British Sign Language.

## Supporting Diversity

### Online Groups

To support our diverse student population, we run a number of online groups and spaces for students to make their own. Continuing to work in partnership with the College learning support team the Care-Experienced student group has been in place for another successful year. The space is useful for students to ask questions and get relevant information and opportunities. The group currently has 114 members.



Other online spaces include similar groups for LGBT+ students, Student Parents & Carers, Women's group, BAME student group and Disabled student group. Importantly, President Jordan, has continued to work with the Men's Support Network to ensure a supporting environment to ask for help and share experiences. The Men's Support Network has 54 members and activity has included livestreams and work out sessions online. Common for all these groups has been the difficulty keeping content up to date with a small team, however with an incoming additional member of staff to support this work, we are hopeful to see an increase in student activity with these groups.

## Sunflower Lanyard Hidden Disability Scheme



With the new challenges COVID-19 has brought when accessing services, and following queries and feedback from students on the ECSA Virtual Campus, we worked with relevant College teams to work on behalf of Edinburgh College to sign-up to the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme](#). The sunflower lanyard or identification card allows us to recognise students with hidden disabilities, who for example might be exempt from wearing face masks, or needing assistance when accessing College services and facilities. As part of joining the scheme, Edinburgh College are committing to train staff on how to recognise

the Sunflower scheme, ensuring they have a deeper understanding of hidden disabilities, and the confidence to approach and support those with hidden disabilities.

Students and staff can get a lanyard for free by filling in a quick collection form and will be able to pick it up during normal college hours from their specified campus the next day.





# Sustainability & Go Green

## Climate Change Awareness

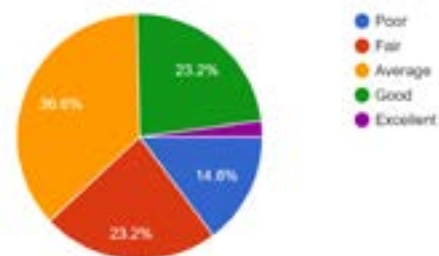
This academic year we've been able to deliver Climate Change and Sustainability workshops to 26 different classes (359 students) - ranging from Professional Cookery and Bakery, through to Brickwork and Childhood Practice. This was enabled through reaching out to LDT's at the start of the year, followed by advertising these sessions in Staff Newsletters. Staff members would get in touch to express an interest, then we would talk them through the different sessions we had available, to then decide on which was most appropriate to the class they were working with.

To begin with, this was done through a simple PowerPoint presentation, with a feedback form link posted at the end of the session. As this was only gaining a 17% response rate to the survey, we decided to buy a Mentimeter membership, so we could make our presentations more engaging for students. This allowed us to go from 17% of participants responding to our survey (32 responses from 193 students across 15 classes), to 65% of participants engaging in our questions through Mentimeter (108 responses from 166 students across 11 classes).

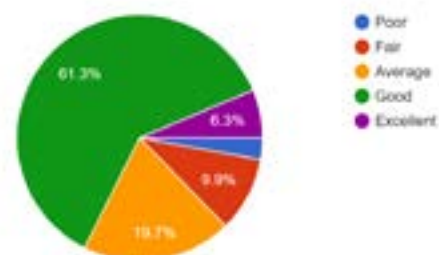
At the start of the session, we ask students how they would rate their current knowledge of climate change, and how much they think it relates to their course. We then ask these questions again after the session, and the results in changes in knowledge and understanding of relevance can be shown through the graphs opposite.

We have also produced two different Sustainability guides for students - an [Ethical Consumer Guide](#), and a [Sustainability at Home Guide](#). Both of these resources were developed by one of our part-time student staff members, and give lots of tips to students on how to live a more sustainable lifestyle, even when they've had to be at home more than normal due to Government restrictions. These guides have had 22 and 16 unique page views, respectively.

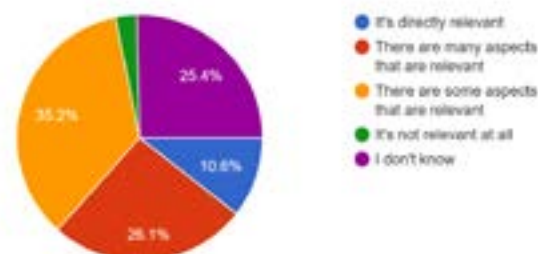
How would you rate your knowledge of climate change and sustainability before the session?  
142 responses



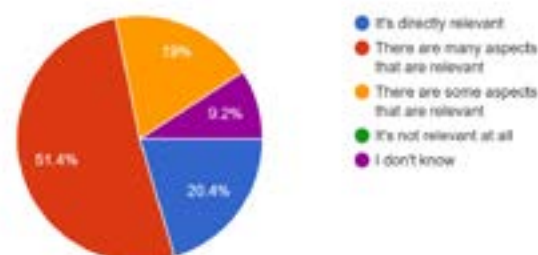
How would you rate your knowledge of climate change and sustainability after the session?  
142 responses



Before the session, how relevant did you think climate change and sustainability were to your subject area?  
142 responses



After the session, how relevant do you think climate change and sustainability are to your subject area?  
142 responses



These, alongside three online film screenings of films with a sustainability focus, have allowed us to continue engaging our students with climate change while they've had reduced access to physical events on campus. Once restrictions eased after the Easter holidays, we also ran two seed giveaways on campus, in collaboration with Victoria (VP Activities) for [Mental Health Awareness Week](#). This allowed us to have discussions with students about the environmental and mental health benefits of gardening.

Through this project, we have also been able to have all five members of Go Green staff (two Sustainability Officers and three Sustainability Assistants) attend Carbon Literacy for Communities training. This has greatly helped us with formulating content for our climate change class workshops, and has also provided these staff members with a chance to gain a greater understanding of topics relating to climate change and sustainability.

## Travel

Due to campuses being closed for large parts of this academic year, we have had reduced chances to influence students' travel behaviour to campus. One way we have engaged students with travel considerations during the phased return of students and staff to campuses after summer has involved creating [COVID-19-specific travel guidance documents](#). These guides promoted sustainable and active travel methods, and highlighted safety considerations and guidance from transport providers. These were sent out to all staff and students before their return to campus. One tool that was highlighted in these guides was our [myPTP travel planning widget](#), which is supplied through our Liftshare membership and creates bespoke travel plans to people based on their start and destination postcodes. These plans prioritise active travel methods when journeys have a low mileage. Throughout the year, 76 travel plans have been sent out through this service.

In November, we launched our [Be Bright Be Seen campaign](#). Usually this would include physical events run in conjunction with Edinburgh City Council, but as Government guidance was fairly

strict at this point, we were instead provided with free high-visibility items and bike lights to give out to our students. We combined these with bike bells and better-quality bike lights we purchased through our funding, in order to give active travel safety packs out to our students. While restrictions allowed, we gave these packs out to students outside campus buildings, but during phases of full lockdown we were able to send these out to students in the mail. This approach has allowed us to distribute these items to 30 students, who have given extremely positive feedback about the provision of these resources.

We're extremely excited to be able to offer our students the opportunity to [apply for one of five free bikes](#), and a range of safety equipment to go along with them (helmet, lock, lights, etc). This has come about through collaboration with the College's Estates team, as they received a fleet of free bikes from the University of Edinburgh a while back that weren't successfully used for a loan scheme. We've therefore split the cost of new parts and servicing with the College, so that these bikes are safe to give out to students. We've now opened up an application form for this through our website, which we have firstly distributed to the College's Guidance Team, who will pass this information on to students who they believe would get the greatest benefit from receiving a bike. The first review of applications will take place after an initial deadline of the 18th June, and if there are still bikes available after this, we will reopen this form at the start of next academic year.

## Community Fridges

Due to the minimal access we have had to campuses this year we have postponed the set-up of our community fridges to academic year 2021/22. However, that hasn't stopped us from engaging our students with food waste reduction! One of the main ways we have delivered this outcome is through our [Zero Waste Cooking Series](#). This is a collection of videos focused on giving practical tips and visualisations on how to use more parts of an ingredient, whilst communicating the importance of reducing our food waste. A total of 10 videos have been released to date, with one more scheduled to be published before the end of this term. These



were presented by our previous Sustainability Officer, Grace, and were predominantly edited by our student staff member Paige. These videos have received 216 views on YouTube and 1192 views on Facebook.

While the views on these videos have been positive, we also wanted to provide a more active learning opportunity, which led us to collaborate with Rose (VP Welfare) to run a live event as part of her Wellbeing Wednesday series. The [zero waste "cook-a-long"](#) involved cooking alongside students with demonstrations on how they could reduce their food waste and chats about energy saving tips. To limit the possible barriers of getting involved in this event, we offered a free food box of ingredients to the "cook-a-long" from a local company. Based on research of local independent companies around Edinburgh based on their ethos, locality of produce and sustainability of their deliveries conducted by our Sustainability Assistant Chloe, which selected The Eco Larder to provide food boxes to 5 of the 6 students who attended. The feedback from students about the event was very positive.



We have also provided students with the opportunity to keep a household food waste diary to help them engage with their food waste levels whilst spending more time at home. The first attempt to run this project was unsuccessful, so we revised our approach and advertised this again through social media and in a newsletter to the Environmental Society as part of a [New Year Pledge](#) campaign. It was more successful this time, with 5 students expressing interest, and 3 students completing the project. Students were offered a small incentive of a £10 voucher to a local zero waste shop for their participation.

After collecting base line data of initial food waste levels in their households, students were contacted to discuss how they could reduce their food waste via email or a 1 to 1 discussion through Teams. They were then contacted a couple of weeks later for follow-up data to see if our food waste reduction tips had made an impact on their food waste. All participants successfully reduced the amount of food waste in their households, which allowed us to collect data for our carbon report whilst engaging students with this topic.

Due to the significant impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on our ability to run events for our students, we were looking at a significant underspend for the first year of the project. Fortunately, we were able to make the case to our funders for us to use this money to purchase an electric cargo bike and trailer. This will allow us to collect food donations for our fridges in an environmentally friendly way, as well as offering an alternative transport option for moving resources between campuses for ongoing events and activities.

## Swap Shop

Although we haven't been able to get our Swap Shops set up on campus, we have found an alternative - a virtual Swap Shop! This is hosted [through the ECSA website](#), and includes an image and information about each piece of clothing we have available. To ensure that our students are the only people able to access this, they first need to log onto our website with their student login. Once they're logged in, they can add any of the free items to their shopping bag, then checkout with these items. To allow this to happen, we've taken donations from students and colleagues to stock this Swap Shop. So far, we've received almost 110kg of clothes and accessories donations - about 10kg of which has been given out to students across 9 orders. We've also added sections to the site for books and small household items, to make it clear that these items are also accepted. We're also aiming to have a physical swap event on Granton campus before the summer holidays, in order to get some direct student engagement before they're off campus for a couple of months.

# Pandemic Response

## Building Online Services

In our last End of Year Report in June 2020, we dedicated a significant section of the report to the activities and response to the lockdown that we all found ourselves in for the last 3 months of the academic year. This year, we have had a full academic year of working and supporting students, entirely remotely, dealing with the ever-changing issues that the pandemic has thrown up, and working in partnership to react to and lead on the response to the pandemic.

We have spent a lot of the past year building on the online services which we established right back in March 2020. Some of the temporary solutions became permanent, and new ways of working became the norm. [Our Virtual Campus](#), as has been mentioned, has acted as a springboard for further student engagement and support. A private Facebook group encompassing approximately 2,500 members, it has helped us get key information out to students quickly, gather instant feedback on issues, answer student queries quickly, and helped us foster a sense of community in a time when most were sitting at home alone. With over 1,700 conversations to date, it has been the hub of activity for student engagement over the year.

Another new service we established this year has been the [virtual drop-in](#). This is a single-click access to speak to a member of our team on a video call. This service has been running since May 2020 and has proven a vital lifeline for students who found themselves "digitally lost" as they tried to access the College remotely. As the service is run using Google Meet, it doesn't require log-ins or access to College systems to be able to get through, so it is the most accessible live digital service we could possibly have offered. This proved instrumental in helping the most anxious and confused students speak to a member of our team and get live assistance for anything from logging into the College systems, to advice on funding, questions about timetables, and anything else that they just didn't know where to go to for help. In short, many students

who would have been left alone had somewhere to go to for help from a single click from our website.

Our success in developing these new services was quickly picked up by our colleagues in the Student Experience team who approached us for help to establish an online drop-in system of their own. Working with colleagues in Student Experience, Communications, and IT, a new drop-in service was developed to sit on the Microsoft Teams platform. As all student have access to Microsoft Teams for the online learning, this means that, so long as they are logged into the College system, they can access the drop-ins a certain times of the day, rather than clogging up email inboxes requesting appointments with an advisor, or coming to us asking who is best to contact. The Student Experience virtual drop-ins are now a fixed part of the Microsoft Teams landing page, so students can access these pages all year round, helping accessing student support that bit easier.

## Identifying Issues & Working Together on Solutions

As none of us have ever experienced a year quite like this before, it wasn't always obvious where the issues were going to crop up. Our work on engaging students throughout the year and giving them obvious places to go for help or information, has resulted in us being better placed to identify issues. Gathering feedback through the Virtual Campus, supporting individual students through our online services, and listening to our network of Class Reps. Most of these issues we have been able to raise quickly with the relevant College teams and worked together on developing solutions.

The scale of the student funding crisis experiences during the first semester became more clear as we were able to take growing concerns from students who had contacted us directly and test them with a wide variety of students to see if they had similar experiences. Once identified, we were able to report it back to



the relevant member of the Senior Management Team and work on how we can support a solution. This resulted in us working very closely with the Student Funding Team, hosting a live online Q&A with the Principal and members of the Student Experience Team, and weekly monitoring meetings with the Head of Student Experience and the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance, right through until Christmas. Students waiting for delayed payments were given a one-off advance payment of £300 until the backlog was eventually cleared in mid-December. In Semester 2, ECSA has joined with a range of colleagues to take part in the lean project management exercise to identify changes to the student funding processes to avoid such major issues occurring again in the future.

Another issue where we have worked very closely with the College to address has been the development and delivery of assessments and placements in a year where both have been majorly disrupted. The cancelling of exams by the SQA and the development of the alternative assessment model left a lot of students confused and anxious about being treated fairly, potentially not completing their courses, and concerned for how it might impact their future studies or careers. We worked closely with the Quality Team, Heads of Faculty, Vice Principals, and the Communications team to ensure the messages about assessments were clear and support was available for anyone wanting further information or needed additional support.

Our work with [NUS Scotland](#) allowed discussions at a national level to include real life examples from our members to help shape the responses of government, national organisations and Colleges. This was also the case when discussing work placements for courses which rely on these placements as a core part of their qualification. Again, working with national organisations, we raised the potential issues around non-completion, impacts on future studying, or entering certain professions. At a local level, we have been part of the Placements working Group, led by the Head of Faculty for Health, Wellbeing, and Social Sciences, where the vast majority of the essential work placements are based. With restrictions remaining in place to very late in the semester, and placement providers still trying

to get back on track with re-opening, it was very satisfying to see hundreds of students access essential placement opportunities throughout May and into June.

As restrictions have lifted and a small proportion of students have been back on campus, we have supported many of them to deal with the transition from remote learning, to on campus practical lessons and in-person assessments. Many students have been studying remotely for well over a year and were shocked, anxious, stressed, and concerned about being asked to come onto campus for these one-off days, with some having never been on campus before. Again, using our network of Class Reps, we quickly realised that the issues affected quite a range of students and courses. We worked with the relevant curriculum staff (Heads of Faculty, Curriculum Managers, and Curriculum Leaders) to arrange an open Q&A session for any student to attend and get their concerns aired. The outputs from this meeting included a new [“what to expect on campus for assessments” video](#) being produced, and many courses offering support for campus orientation to ease the stress of assessment days. Although it was not possible to offer alternatives to being on campus for most students in this situation, there was a heartfelt appreciation from students that the faculty staff took their time to listen and answer as many questions as they could.

## Supporting the College's Response to the Pandemic

From the beginning of the global pandemic back in February 2020, ECSA has positioned itself to be an equal partner in the work involved with reacting to the every-changing situation, and making sure the student voice is at the core of decision-making. At a College level, this has taken several forms. We have been an active member of a variety of working groups addressing specific issues facing students. These have included groups planning and authorising on-campus activity, virtual Welcome Events, student work placements, digital support services, review of the student funding process, and dealing with the operational impacts of industrial action by lecturing staff. We see our place as, not shouting from the side lines, but

being equal partners in honestly discussing issues facing students and working together on developing solutions.



We have worked very closely with the College Communications Team to ensure that students are getting the right information as quickly as it becomes available and offering follow-up opportunities for students to ask questions or clarify things. This has also included designing and producing the [College's first ever fully online Welcome Events](#) and pre-recorded videos from the Principal to students with major updates. We have also worked closely to promote critical calls to action around Government guidance including travel restrictions, face covering on campus, lateral flow testing, and the vaccination programme.



## Engaging Students Throughout the Year

Some of our major areas of activity and events throughout the past year have been focussed on keeping students engaged – both to keep them informed, and to maintain a sense of community whilst working and learning remotely. Supporting students to get online at the beginning of the year was a monumental task. It is usually quite challenging to explain new systems and processes in person, but doing it remotely was another level.

Our online services held up well during this period of intense activity as thousands of students attempted to get online over the course of a few days on unfamiliar systems. Our telephone line, e-mail inbox, and Facebook messenger inboxes were all extremely busy, but our [single-click online drop-in](#) proved the most popular for students to seek help. Here, we were able to share screens, talk them through the process and check systems with them ‘in person’. Between Welcome Week and the first week of term, we recorded 494 drop-ins, with the average call taking approximately 10 minutes. Throughout the start of term, we had calls from all across Scotland, England, continental Europe, and beyond as students got set up to learn remotely.

We have been very conscious to ensure that we are not merely generating static content or pre-recorded videos for students, but seeking to develop interactive opportunities, especially for specific complex issues. With this in mind, we have delivered various live stream Q&A events, allowing us to facilitate discussions directly between students and decision-makers. These have covered a wide range of issues including plans for the year with the Principal, student funding issues with the Funding Team, [employment opportunities with the new St James' Quarter](#), and end of year assessments & work placements with Heads of Faculty and Curriculum Managers. This is a model that has been very successful as students get the information directly from decision-makers, but it also allows us to record the interactions and share them with anyone who couldn't make it along to the live event. This wouldn't be so easy



if we were holding physical events on campus, so we see this as a really positive development from a challenging time.

Another area we worked on in terms of engagement was promoting some real positives from the year. It is clear that many students get swept up in the stress and anxiety of not knowing what is going to happen next, and have not given themselves time to pause and take stock of the positives. In December, we held an online Christmas party to allow students the chance to socialise and relax with each other in a safe online space. With quizzes, Christmas crafts and plenty of laughs, it was a good chance for people to relax for a change. We also asked students for nominations for the “[ECSA-mas Nice List](#)”. This was a chance for students to nominate other students who had been a real help for them over the course of the first semester. It was a great experience with more than 50 students nominated. We rewarded the short-listed students with Amazon vouchers (to spend on themselves!) wit the overall winner getting a locally-sources Christmas hamper to enjoy with family and friends.



Our final act of the academic year to keep students engaged and enthused, quite fittingly, was our “[Great Big Student Thank You](#)”. With all of the stress of the pandemic, the disruption to courses, the changes to government guidance, the industrial action by lecturers, and the general feeling of being bashed about all year, we found that many students were, quite rightly, thankful for all the help they had received to make it through the year. So, this was an opportunity for students to submit a note of thanks to anyone on the College who had helped them. We received over 300 “Thank Yous”, recognising 216 individual people from across the College, including students, lecturers and support staff:

- 142 Lecturers
- 53 Students
- 12 LDTs
- 9 Other staff



All “Thank Yous” were sent to every individual who was thanked and we published [a searchable list](#) on our website to show everyone the lovely positive messages which were submitted. The students who submitted the thanks were involved in the development of videos to highlight the people who had helped them and promote the message of thank you and positivity to staff and students alike. After the year we have all been through, with the successes we have had, despite the challenges, it feels fitting to end with “Thank You”.

# Thanks

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, the Development Trust, 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, the Scottish Youth Parliament, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, The Scottish Funding Council, Keep Scotland Beautiful, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and Edinburgh Community Learning & Development.

For an organisation with 3 full-time officers, 4 permanent staff and 2 project-funded staff, 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. In a year that has seen challenges and uncertainty beyond compare, they have stuck together, adapted and overcame everything that was thrown at them. The word ‘resilience’ gets thrown around a lot these days when people are struggling. In our view, Edinburgh College students have been the epitome of what it truly means to be resilient. 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 2021-22 brings and hopes to continue to do everyone at Edinburgh College proud in the months to come as we set about work on our new Strategic Plan and our new way of working.

Reflecting on the year that was, all we can say is, in a year like no other, team work most definitely makes the dream work!

Thank you.





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

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