



2022 | 2023

EC Students' Association Impact Report

Powered by Students,
Driven by values,
Committed to better.





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President's Introduction

DAVID ELDER

As the President of EC Students' Association for 2022/23 it is my pleasure to present to the Board of Management of Edinburgh College, our Annual Impact Report.

The team started off the year with a hybrid approach, working from home and one day a week on campus, until students returned to College in August. We spent that time planning for events such as our Freshers' Fairs, our induction to all students, and finalising the Priority Objectives we planned to carry out during the academic year.

Getting back on campus and being able to work with students face-to-face was when the real job started. Activities such as recruiting and training our Class Reps and running freshers' events across all four campuses allowed us to meet students and build good relationships for the year ahead. Our Vice President Activities set up our very own Discord server, which has attracted around 500 students from across the College and hosts so many different channels within that. This is a secure safe space for our students to chat with each other, and is monitored by the Students' Association Officers and staff.

The idea of providing free breakfasts was something I was passionate about coming into office this year. After pitching the idea to the Chair of the Board and the Principal, a working group was set up to look at the feasibility of this happening within the College. I am proud to say that the project ended on 25th May for the 2022/23 Academic Year, and has fed approximately 20,000 students since its launch in the October of 2022. Seeing this through, and the help it has provided to so many students has given me great pride.





We have had a number of great wins through our Class Rep system this year with 607 being registered on our system and 245 completing either in-person or online training. A number of issues were raised around the need for gender neutral toilets on all campuses, timetabling, preferred names over legal names on College systems, and catering which has been the biggest issue across all the campuses.

With all the turmoil of the Curriculum Reshaping and subsequent Voluntary Severance Scheme in the College this year, we wanted to give the students a chance to give positive feedback to the staff, for all the great work that we might not necessarily hear about. We launched The Big Student Thank You Awards with five categories, and one overall winner from the five. The judging panel included the Chair of the Learning, Teaching, and Student Experience Committee to make it a fair and equal process.

I am extremely proud as President of what we have achieved in the year, especially starting the year with so many staff members short in our team. Having the new staff come on board in January made a huge difference in what we do and how we run, and has brought fresh ideas into the Association.

As we have spent the past year celebrating our big tenth birthday, the student voice has never been stronger at Edinburgh College, and I hope that continues for years to come. It has been an honour, and a privilege to serve as Student President of such an institution as Edinburgh College.

David Elder
President 2022/23



Our Top 10 of 2022/2023

1. Breakfast Club

Since October 2022, we've been running Breakfast Club at all four campuses, and have now provided a whopping 19,350 breakfasts for free to our students, helping them combat the cost-of-living crisis and start the day fully fuelled up and ready to learn.

"This project means a lot to me, after doing significant research before hand into how students perform better with something to eat first thing in the morning. I am proud of what we have achieved, and hope this will be kept going at Edinburgh College after I finish my year in office."

David Elder, President 2022-23



2. Big Student Thank You

We gave students the chance to say 'thank you' to College Staff who have helped them this year via the Big Student Thank You. We received 226 nominations celebrating 109 of our wonderful colleagues across all four faculties and the support staff team.



3. Birthday Cake Tour

We've loved being back on campus with students, running stalls and engagement events throughout the year. EC Students' Association is 10 years old this year, and what better way to celebrate than with cake! We dished out a total of 250 slices of cake across all four campuses which, unsurprisingly, was a big hit with students.



4. 10th Anniversary Competitions

As part of our 10th anniversary celebrations this year, we invited our talented students to share their stories and submit their artworks about their experience of Edinburgh College. We were blown away by the diversity of the submissions, with 67 entries to our stories competition alone! Our art competition winners will be proudly displayed publicly on campus in the coming months. Our winner was Jeanne Magloire, a HNC Animation student.



"Self portrait in the busy crowd of the college"
by Jeanne Magloire

5. Awareness & Diversity Events

Supporting and celebrating Edinburgh College's amazing diversity is at the heart of EC Students' Association's mission. This year we shared information and resources, and brought people together on campus for LGBT+ History Month, International Women's Day, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, Hidden Disabilities Awareness and Pride events.

Our Top 10 of 2022/2023

6. Elections 2023

Engagement levels in our Elections this year were the highest in three years, with 1012 votes cast. We ran in-person voting stations on all four campuses, and look forward to working with Skye Marriner (President), Luna Morrison (Vice President Welfare) and Jon Craig (Vice President Activities) from July.



7. Discord Server Launch

Communities come in many different shapes and sizes, and this year we celebrated that by launching our Discord server! We now have 12 societies and 569 regular users, and an online space where students can connect with each other informally, and share advice about College life.

8. Mental Health & Wellbeing

This year saw an amazing array of events and initiatives around student mental health, from our Wellbeing Fair to naloxone training, to the reboot of our Student Mental Health Agreement and our self-care stall. We are there for all students, however they are feeling.



9. Sustainability

We are committed to sustainability and our cross-campus Community Fridges and SwapShops continue to go from strength to strength. Despite losing our staff resource for this project last year, we have managed to continue to deliver these initiatives and have saved 11 metric tonnes of food and clothing from going to landfill, and our team continue to lobby for the climate through attending rallies and events.



10. Awards

We were delighted to see our work has been recognised by industry leaders: we were highly commended at the Green Gown and College Development Network Awards, have been shortlisted for the Herald's Higher Education Awards, and jointly with the College, we won Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce's Responsible Business of the Year Award.





Education



Our Education Highlights

Class Representatives

The Class Rep system is an important part of the College's ecosystem, helping us to amplify student voice, closing the feedback loop on student experience, and acting as conduit of useful information between the College Management, the Students' Association and the student body.



Over the course of this 2022-23 academic year, 607 students registered as Class Reps, with 245 attending a Class Rep training session either online, via a Moodle course, or in-person. These were our first in-person Class Rep training sessions since 2019, and a focus on in-person engagement was a key part of our approach this year.

Our Class Reps are often our first port of call when we're conducting student surveys, such as our End of Semester 1 Survey and our Student Mental Health Survey. We've decided to embed this approach in our Class Rep meetings as much as possible, using online tools like Mentimeter to allow us to 'take the temperature' with students. By asking the same questions at each meeting throughout the year, we're building a picture of how students are feeling about their College experience.

Some issues that arose from the Class Rep system are listed below.

Travel and transport to and from College

We wrote to Transport for Edinburgh after students told us that getting to and from College was difficult for them. The services were unreliable, buses were often full, and the tracker system used by Lothian Buses often did not work. The letter was co-signed by all the higher education institution student presidents across the City of Edinburgh, which represents a level of cross-collaboration we are truly proud of.



Preferred names

We were delighted to hear that in January, the College introduced a Preferred Name category on the ECAS application system. This issue had been raised by EC Students' Association's Full-Time Officers and Class Reps over several years of discussions and meetings. A soft launch of this was rolled out in January of this year and will be available to all students from August this year. This change will make a huge difference to our inclusivity, particularly to students who are transitioning.



Timetables

There were issues with students getting timetables late, even into the third or fourth week of term this year. There were also a number of concerns around class sizes, classes being split up into different rooms and timetables changing weekly without enough advance warning from staff. We raised these issues at the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

Space to study at Sighthill after the Library is closed

Students at Sighthill campus who wanted to stay on later and study after class told us that the library closes at 4.30pm and the computers automatically go off at 4.15pm, leading to an absence of quiet study spaces that students can use at this time. We located a room and booked it out for the rest of the year, for students to use if they wanted to hang on an extra hour at the end of the day to finish off their work.

Catering

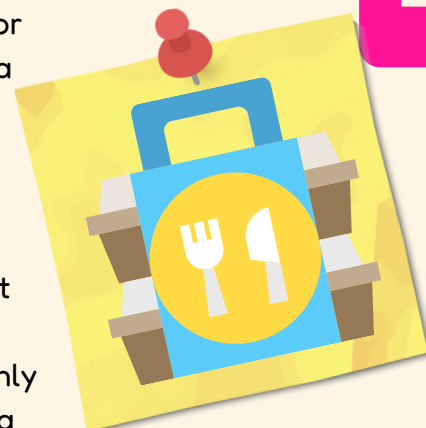
This has been a huge talking point for students this year across all four campuses and something we have really put pressure on the Management as well as the College's Board of Trustees to rectify. Three of the four campuses now have a hot food offering, with Midlothian remaining with only a coffee bar and a range of soup and sausage rolls. This is therefore still a big issue facing the student population at Midlothian and something that still requires improvement.

We took part in a Class Rep Diversity Monitoring survey run by sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland), which yielded some interesting results. 55 Class Reps completed the survey, of which 48.9% said they had a disability, health condition or learning difficulty that has a substantial and long-term impact on their day-to-day life. Further to this, 63.6% described their ethnic group as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish or British.

We presented the findings of the survey to the Widening Access, Equality and Diversity working group, and intend to work with Nina Munday, the College's EDI Lead to embed this type of survey into Class Rep training sessions at the start of semester, to gain more responses. Ultimately, we would like the Class Rep community to reflect the diversity of Edinburgh College.

In May, we welcomed Education Scotland to Edinburgh College, and were pleased to be able to suggest some Class Reps who had been particularly engaged throughout the year to take part in focus groups on the Student Experience. Meanwhile, the EC Students' Association team fed back on our impact on student life, and how we deliver our Class Rep training to ensure that our reps are getting the most out of the experience.

It is important to us to be plugged into the wider Tertiary Education sector on issues facing students across Scotland by taking part in networking events and conferences throughout the year. David attended four sessions of the National Education Officers' Network (NEON), which involved developing a new Student Learning Experience Tool. This will help ensure that all students across Scotland receive the same quality in their Student Learning Experience.



Big Student Thank You

We were delighted to run the Big Student Thank You Awards again this year, an initiative which gives students the chance to say 'thank you' to those College lecturers and staff who have helped them most.

In a year that has had its tough moments, we know that there have been incredible people across the College who have made a real difference to the student community and to their overall College experience. We wanted to recognise their contributions and were really touched by the nominations which show the depth of students' appreciation.



Education



"Raymond is a legend. He's a cool guy and amazing at his job. His teaching style is clear, easy to understand and straight to the point while having a joke and laugh. He believes in hands on learning and stands back to let students use their own initiative. If you do need help with anything painting related (not necessarily to do with course work), he will take the time to explain or help in any way he can, even staying after class has finished for the day.

He's chill, friendly and approachable but also straight up and genuine. Raymond is very understanding of people's personal circumstances and has gone out of his way on many occasions to help me out, from sourcing materials I've needed to giving potential employers recommendations for me (even told one to give me a van because he knows I need one haha).

As a woman entering a male dominated environment, Raymond really helped make me feel not only welcome but more importantly capable. I can't thank him enough for all his wisdom and the confidence he has inspired in me. Cheers Ray 😊 "



Overall, we received 226 nominations and are can now announce the winners:

- Kerry Dempsey – Best Lecturer Construction and Engineering
- Scott Johnston – Best Lecturer Creative Industries
- Nichola Heneke – Best Lecturer Tourism, Hospitality and Business
- Kirsten Harrold – Best Lecturer Health, Wellbeing & Social Science
- Liam Dodds – Guiding Hand Award for Support Staff

Our 'Outstanding Lecturer of the Year' is Kerry Dempsey from Automotive Engineering, who received 19 separate nominations from her students, including this one:

"Kerry is an awesome teacher and a great role model. It's a shame there aren't more female instructors like Kerry in automotive engineering. I don't think there is anything she doesn't know about cars. Thank you, Kerry for all your help. I've learnt so much from you over the past few years! "

We look forward to presenting each of the winners with their awards in the final weeks of term.

Elections 2023

Our Elections took place in March, with polling open for four days online and in-person election stalls provided at every campus. It was fantastic for the EC Students' Association staff team to interact in-person with so many students. Not only did this enable student participation in the elections, but it also encouraged meaningful conversations about some of the issues facing students.

Engagement levels were the highest in three years, with 1012 votes cast, and we're grateful to every student who took the time to vote, and to the candidates who all put their heart and soul into campaigning.

Our next team of Full Time Officers will be:

- Skye Marriner (President)**
- Luna Morrison (Vice President Welfare)**
- Jon Craig (Vice President Activities)**

The team will take up their posts from the 1st July 2023 until the 30th June 2024.



PRESIDENT | VP WELFARE | VP ACTIVITIES

Education



Activities



Our Activities Highlights

Activities play a crucial role in fostering a vibrant and engaging student experience at Edinburgh College. In this section, we will highlight some of the key activities organised by the Students' Association, showcasing our commitment to inclusivity, community building, and providing diverse opportunities for student involvement.

Freshers' Week

Freshers' Week marked the exciting beginning of the academic year, where new students were warmly welcomed into the Edinburgh College community. This week-long tour of the campuses was filled with a range of events and activities designed to help students settle in, make connections, and explore the vast array of opportunities available to them. From informative stalls to the photobooth, Freshers' Week set the stage for a memorable and fulfilling College experience.



Discord Server

Knowing the importance of online platforms in connecting students, we launched a dedicated Discord server as a virtual hub for student engagement and interaction.

This platform provided a space for students to connect with their peers, share interests, seek support, and stay updated on the latest news and events. The

Discord server became a thriving online community, fostering friendships and facilitating collaboration between students from different courses, campuses, and backgrounds. To date, we have developed 12 clubs & societies and have over 500 students engaged on the platform.

New Societies and Online Content

To cater to the diverse interests of our students, we introduced new format for societies and expanded our online content offerings. Using the Discord to host societies, we were able to allow students to easily propose and vote on societies, electing organisers to host and create online and in person events. One notable addition was the introduction of the Photo Society (photo-soc), which provided a platform for photography enthusiasts to display their skills, exchange ideas, and participate in photography-related activities. This society actively organised online exhibitions and encouraged students to explore their creativity and connect with like-minded individuals by providing constructive feedback where asked.



Video Games Events

In line with the growing popularity of video games as a form of entertainment and social interaction, we organised two open and inclusive Games Society events at the Granton and Sighthill campuses.

These events featured a bracket-style tournament where students battled it out in iconic games like Gang Beasts and Mario Kart. By hosting these events in public spaces, we aimed to encourage broad participation and create a sense of community among students. These video game events provided a fun and engaging platform for students to unwind, showcase their gaming skills, and forge new friendships.

Dungeons and Dragons

Recognising the appeal of tabletop role-playing games, the students organised weekly Dungeons and Dragons sessions on the Sighthill campus that attracted a passionate and diverse group of students.

This society organised all meetings themselves and have been using EC Students' Association resources to help make their dreams reality. We have been over the moon with their progress in both using the spaces within the campus and hosting organised group meetings online out of term time.

These sessions offered a unique opportunity for students to immerse themselves in imaginative storytelling, problem-solving, and collaborative gameplay, pulling the Edinburgh college community together in a friendly and accepting environment. The Dungeons and Dragons events facilitated a space where students could exercise their creativity, develop teamwork skills, and form lasting connections with fellow adventurers.



LGBTQ+ Society Events

EC Students' Association takes immense pride in promoting inclusivity and celebrating diversity.

To this end, we organised a series of events to help educate the Edinburgh College community on LGBTQ+ issues. These events provided a safe and welcoming environment for students to express their identities, engage in discussions, and participate in educational interactions focused on LGBTQ+ issues and how EC Students' Association can help our students.

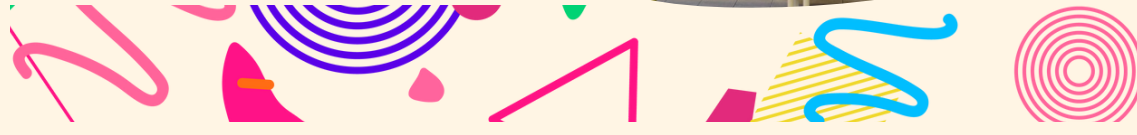
By fostering a sense of belonging and understanding, these events aimed to create a more inclusive college community that values and respects all individuals, no matter their identity.



Activities

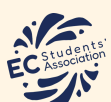


External Events



In addition to us organising activities, we also collaborated with external partners to bring exciting events to our students. One notable example was the Vintage Vera Clothing Sale, where students had the opportunity to explore a curated selection of vintage clothing and accessories. This event not only provided a unique shopping experience but also offered students the chance to support sustainable fashion practices and embrace individual style. By partnering with external organisations through Native, the student movement marketing agency, we will be able to bring more events to enhance the college community in the coming years.

These activities, along with many other student-run events we supported, were instrumental in enhancing student engagement, promoting personal growth, and fostering a sense of community and belonging within Edinburgh College. By offering a variety of events and opportunities, we aimed to ensure that every student could find avenues for personal development, social interaction, and exploration of their passions.





Support



Our Support Highlights

Breakfast Club

Providing free breakfasts for all students was one of David Elder's key priority objectives for his year as Student President. The idea was presented to both the Chair of the Board of Management and College Principal. A working group was set up and Chaired by the College's Director for Communications, Policies and Research which looked at this project becoming a reality. An initial survey was run, to see what appetite there would be for such a project in the College, which gained over 700 responses in just two weeks. From here, we identified from the best opening hours and busiest days on campuses.



Support

The Breakfast Club Pilot Project ran from October – December 2022, and fed around 4500 students. Breakfast Club was fully rolled out in January 2023, and reached completion on the 25th May. Overall, the initiative provided approximately 20,000 free breakfasts across all College campuses. This has been a huge win for EC Students' Association, and is a source of great pride for Student President David Elder.

End of Semester 1 Survey Results

The End of Semester 1 Survey gave students the chance to reflect on their experience. Informed by Class Rep discussions and feedback we received in semester one, it focused on Funding, College Services and the Cost of Living. The survey was quick and easy for students to fill out, and received 197 responses, including the following interesting insights into the issues facing students.

- Major concerns about the cost-of-living in areas such as home energy, food, transport and rent
- Other cost of living issues included bills, childcare and additional costs of living due to disability
- 48% of responders didn't know about discretionary funding and how to go about accessing it

While a large proportion of students are aware of services that can assist them in challenging times, some responders felt that support is difficult to access and that it is unclear who is eligible. We at EC Students' Association believe that more can be done to spread awareness of these helpful resources and to reduce stigma around seeking help. This would in turn improve the student experience at the College.

Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis informed much of our work this academic year: discretionary funding, wellbeing services, Breakfast Club and Foodbank referrals are directly linked to this major challenge facing students.

Foodbanks

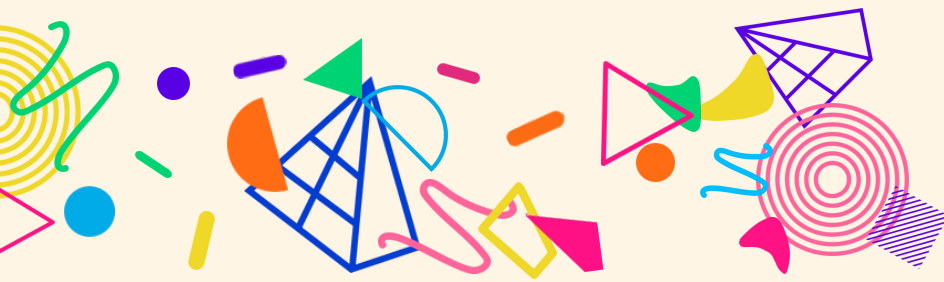
Working with our partners Edinburgh Food Project and Gorebridge Trussell Trust Food Bank, all four campuses are now set up as collection points. The College also worked in partnership with the Edinburgh Food Project to become referral agents, so students can now directly access support from Foodbanks if they need it.

Discretionary Fund – fuel payments

All students eligible for this payment have received two payments of £500. This has been paid out through the College's discretionary fund and there is still enough money available to support students over the summer period.



Support



Mental Health & Wellbeing Events and Activities

We held a Wellbeing Fair on each campus in November, linking College-based support services and external organisations to promote positive wellbeing and support for students. These fairs were held in public spaces on each campus and helped us pro-actively engage with students, as well as provide a platform for services to be promoted. We worked closely with the College's own Wellbeing Team, as well as a range of external organisations from across Edinburgh and the Lothians, including:

- Crew 2000
- NHS Lothian Sexual Health Clinic
- Health In Mind
- Social Security Scotland
- Abused Men In Scotland (AMIS)
- Street Assist

We also had the NHS Sexual Health van on campuses offering confidential sexual health tests to any student who wanted them, and offering advice there and then. They engaged with over 200 students on sexual advice, and more than 50 students took part in the testing programme. We see this partnership as a huge success and hope to continue working with them in the future.



POWERED BY STUDENTS.



Naloxone Training

As part of our Priority Objective around drugs and sexual health awareness, we have worked closely with Crew 2000, an Edinburgh-based harm reduction and outreach charity. Luna, our Vice President Activities, engaged with them regarding their use of Naloxone, a drug that temporarily reverses the effects of opioid overdose. Crew 2000 have provided training to many people and organisations across Edinburgh on this product, most notably at Queen Margaret University, where all First Aiders are trained in its use. Luna completed the training herself earlier in the year and has since supported five other students to do the same, all free of charge. Luna is currently working with the College's Occupational Health Nurse to upskill and roll-out similar training to First Aiders across the College, to ensure more people are trained and ready to administer life-saving interventions if ever faced with opioid-related emergencies.

Support

Student Mental Health Agreement Reboot

To inform the College-wide Student Mental Health Agreement reboot, we invited students to complete a survey on student mental health. The questions were co-written by EC Students' Association and Edinburgh College's Wellbeing Team and were approved by the Assistant Principal: Student Experience. In total, the survey gained 243 responses.

Students rated the current Mental Health support services offered by Edinburgh College as follows:

Overall, the results indicated that students are not always fully aware of the services offered by the College to support them with their mental health. This is an area that could be improved on, by spreading the word more clearly, using multiple platforms. Other interesting results included:

Rating	Response
★ (1 star)	30 (12%)
★★ (2 stars)	19 (8%)
★★★ (3 stars)	79 (33%)
★★★★ (4 stars)	58 (24%)
★★★★★ (5 stars)	34 (14%)
No response	23 (9%)

- 37.5% were uncomfortable discussing mental health with other students
- Academic pressures, the cost of living, and mental health disorders were the top three factors impacting students' mental health
- Connecting with friends, exercising and listening to music were students' top three ways to boost their mental health
- 60% of respondents would like to see mental health awareness training for students introduced at College



Self-Care and Mental Health Engagement

Support



How are you feeling?

What do you do to care for yourself?

In May, we ran a self-care themed stall for Mental Health Awareness Week at Sighthill. We wanted to emphasise the positive impact of self-care, by treating students to resources that they may not be able to afford themselves.

Our stall was packed with self-care treats, including mindfulness journals, pillow sleep spray, herbal teas, bath salts and face masks. While we shared out these treats, we engaged students in conversation, and invited them to share how they were feeling, using the chart opposite.

The stall was a huge engagement success, with 129 students stopping to chat and help themselves to self-care supplies, and 120 sharing their answers to our questions. Of these 120:

- 15% of students rated themselves 5 out of 5
- 40% of students rated themselves 4 out of 5
- 27% of students rated themselves 3 out of 5
- 15% of students rated themselves 2 out of 5
- 3% of students rated themselves 1 out of 5

How you are feeling today?



This exercise gave us a great indication of how students at Sighthill were feeling. We are planning to roll out this initiative across all four College campuses in the next academic year, as it allows us to get a snapshot of students' mental health and encourages them to take a moment to check in with themselves.



Supporting Individual Students

Our Full Time Officers have each made engagement and support a priority this year, ensuring they are directly and efficiently supporting students through one-to-one support. This approach has also hugely helped with wider engagement, as when we help one student, they tell their friends and this builds awareness of the different ways we can support students. We hope to create an environment where any student can ask any question, and we will either know the answer, or can direct them to get the help they need as quickly as possible.

Awards

As part of our work on supporting students through these challenging financial times, we were delighted to be recognised through external awards throughout the year.

Two of the most significant for us were through the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and the Herald Higher Education Awards. Being short-listed for both is incredible recognition in itself, but to have been awarded the Responsible Business of the Year by the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce was very humbling. A joint submission alongside the College, this award recognises our work around the SwapShops, Community Fridges, Breakfast Clubs, Foodbanks, and Community Winter Fair, all geared towards helping students during the cost-of-living crisis.

The Herald Higher Education Awards have also short-listed us for our work in these areas, as part of the “Support Student Wellbeing” category, the only short-listed nominee in the entire awards to include a Students’ Association

Support





Equalities



Our Equalities Highlights



LGBT+ History Month

Supporting minorities is at the heart of what we do, so we were delighted to celebrate LGBT+ History Month in February. Along with articles about queer history [on our website](#), we ran a stall at Granton campus, where students were invited to show their support for our rainbow community by signing our pledge poster. Our VP Welfare and VP Activities were on hand to provide advice and explain some of the work the Association is doing to make LGBT+ students feel safe and welcome at campus. This includes advocating for preferred name and non-binary pronoun options on College enrolment systems, and campaigning for Gender Neutral Toilets. The stall engaged students from within and beyond the LGBT+ student community, with 97 people attending.



Equalities

International Women's Day 2023

To mark International Women's Day we hosted a craft stall at Granton campus which attracted 107 students. Students were invited to learn how to make paper flowers, and then encouraged to gift them to inspirational women in the lives, creating a chain of positivity. The stall drew both students and staff in with a playlist of empowering music by female artists.

During the crafting activities, numerous conversations dwelt on some of the challenges facing women today, from gender-based violence to the gender pay gap, which shows the importance of providing a safe and non-confrontational space where students can talk about these difficult issues. There were lots of positive comments from students involved who went away proudly carrying their flowers, as well as wearing badges and bracelets proclaiming their support for women.



MAY 17

Together always:
united in diversity

I will always stand
with the LGBTQIA+
community.



#IDAHOBIT2023 #IDAHOBIT

Hidden Disabilities Awareness

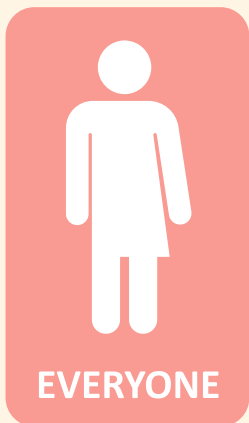
Advocating for students with hidden disabilities is an important part of our work, and so for Neurodiversity Celebration Week (13-19 March), we created an [online resource](#) highlighting some of the most prevalent hidden disabilities, and advising students on how they can seek extra support. In a move to break the stigma around hidden disabilities, we placed posters around the campuses, sharing the fact that 1 in 5 people in Britain have a disability. We are now working to create a series of case studies where students with a range of hidden disabilities share what their student journeys have looked like. This work will help to shape the process of creating a more welcoming and supportive campus for everyone.

NOT ALL DISABILITIES ARE
VISIBLE

HIDDEN disabilities 
1 in 5 people in the UK
have a disability, that can be invisible, even to the sharpest of detectives.



GENDER
Equality



Working towards Gender Neutral facilities

Gender neutral facilities on campuses have been part of discussions between students and Officers for many years, with little movement. In 2021-22, we teamed up with the College Equalities team to do some research and gather some feedback on what students would like to see. This year, the calls from students have grown louder and we have continued to work with numerous College departments to ensure this is high up the agenda. We have worked with the new College Equalities Lead as part of the WAX-ED group (Widening Access and Equalities & Diversity) and we are delighted to see that the investment in facilities to upgrade to more gender-neutral facilities has made it onto the estate's development plan. There remains a lot more to do in this area, but we're delighted to have made this crucial move forward.

Equalities



Sustainability



Our Sustainability Highlights

2021-22 saw the end of the original Go Green project, funded by the Scottish Government for four years, so this meant starting the 2022-23 academic year with no specific staff and no new funding. We have adapted both our offer and our operations to continue to deliver the sustainability projects that help the environment and help our students in their daily lives. We employed three student staff to help run the services, and the rest has been coordinated by a mixture of our full-time staff team and Officers.

Community Fridges



Our Community Fridges have been restocked once per week throughout the academic year, and offer students free food from local supermarkets, through our contract with FareShare. Since September 2022 we have saved more than 7.5 metric tonnes of food from being wasted, while providing students with the opportunity to benefit from high-quality free produce. We have been increasing the number of healthy options offered as part of this scheme, as well as tailoring the provisions for each campus. The scheme is extremely popular with students, and we are committed to continue the community fridge initiative into the next academic year.



Sustainability



SwapShops

The EC Students' Association SwapShops continue to function well with a regular turnover of stock including books, clothing, children's clothes and household items. We are proud of the continued success of this Go Green initiative, which counteracts fast fashion, saves items from waste, and helps students financially. Usage varies over the year, but on average approximately one metric tonne of items is donated and re-used every two months through the four SwapShops, meaning we have diverted approximately 3.5 metric tonnes this academic year.



Climate Strikes and Blogs

The climate crisis and sustainability are key motivators for EC Students' Association to enact change in the College and more broadly. As part of this, our VP Welfare attended a number of climate strikes and rallies throughout the year, to show our support and to represent the student voice, as well as encouraging other students to get involved.

Updated Publications

We have written a number of publications over the last few years relating to sustainability and how students can live a more environmentally-friendly life. As the College experience moves back to in-person learning, we have updated these documents and guides to reflect this context. Publications like the "Eco-Friendly Christmas guide" and the "Beginner's Guide to Ethical Consumerism" have allowed us to support more students to be mindful and make positive choices that help support the environment.



Sustainability



Highly commended sustainability projects

This year, our sustainability work has been recognised both nationally and internationally. At the Green Gown UK and Ireland Awards 2022, the Association was highly commended for the success of our Go Green project. We were the only Students Association shortlisted across all categories, and one of only two colleges named as a Student Engagement finalist.

We were also highly commended at the College Development Network Awards 2022 for our joint work with Edinburgh College for successfully engaging students in sustainability.

It's brilliant to get external recognition for our Go Green Project, which began at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, and has gone from strength to strength. Our Go Green hubs allow students to collect free food, clothing, accessories and books. As a result, we have prevented items from going to landfill and helped to alleviate poverty during a financial crisis. Our hubs are all run by student staff, which gives them an employment opportunity, which in turn develops their skills and confidence.



EC Students' Association Turns 10 Years Old!



EC Students' Association Turns 10 Years Old!



2022-23 has been a very special year for us, as it marks 10 years since the founding of Edinburgh College Students' Association. We celebrated our anniversary-birthday extravaganza with a whole range of activities, events and opportunities, which have increased engagement and have encouraged students to embrace life back on campus.

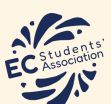
Launching our new brand

To kick off the celebrations, we launched our new branding in August last year, designed by our Student Engagement Assistant Paige, and have now rolled it out across our activities with incredibly positive feedback. We have also set up our online shop, which offers a variety of designs and items with our new logo and sub-branding printed and delivered straight to our members' doors. All our designs are developed and perfected by our own student staff, which makes them extra-special for us.



Birthday Cake Tour

In April, we held a week of celebrations, giving out birthday cake and spreading the word about what the Association contributes to College life. As you can imagine, it went down a treat with the students!



EC Students' Association Turns 10 Years Old!



Anniversary Art Competition

This spring, we held an art competition for students, inviting them to respond to the brief: "What do Edinburgh College Students look like to you?" We wanted to encourage students to reflect on what it means to be part of the diverse student community at Edinburgh College. The competition was open to all students to take part, not just those with an arts background.

We were delighted with the submissions and the range of short-listed entries, but the winner was Jeanne Magloire with this stunning entry "Self-portrait in the busy crowd of the college".



"Self portrait in the busy crowd of the college"

by Jeanne Magloire

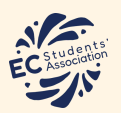
EC Students' Association Turns 10 Years Old!



Humans of Edinburgh College - 10 Student Stories



Our [10 Student Stories project](#) has been at the forefront of our EC Students' Association Turns 10 celebrations this year. Back in November, we invited students to share their journeys through College with us, reflecting on how they got here, their varied experiences, and what the future holds for them. We were overwhelmed by the calibre of the 67 stories that were submitted, which shows the amazing impact that Edinburgh College can have on students' lives. We selected our 10 favourite entries, and met with the students to take a portrait photograph of them on campus. Each of the selected top 10 have been given a framed copy of their story and portrait photograph. We will be publishing a digital version of the stories for everyone to read in June.





Director's Notes

AL WILSON

After three disrupted and unpredictable years, the 2022-23 academic session has felt like a fresh start for us all. After having the same Full-Time Officers for two years, a whole new team of Officers joined us in July 2022, which coincided with four of our six full-time staff moving onto bigger and better things. With the funding for our Go Green Project also coming to an end after four years, in a lot of ways, it really did feel like we were starting from scratch!

As one chapter closed, another opened, and, quite coincidentally, our 10th anniversary year suddenly became a complete refresh and renew of the organisation. Starting the year with a much smaller team, we worked to create a set of Priority Objectives which focussed on engaging with students face-to-face, and supporting them with the challenges of the “post-covid” world.

It has been refreshing and uplifting to have the majority of students back on campus after years of mostly online engagement. Seeing how people interact with us, showing genuine appreciation for the various events, activities, and services we provide, as well as having meaningful conversations with groups and individuals, is what makes the role the Students' Association provides both unique and invaluable. It is fair to say that you don't know what you've got until it is gone, and this has made those in-person moments all the more special this past year.

As much as we have all genuinely enjoyed being back on campus and delivering in-person events across the campuses and throughout the year, the previous three years have clearly had a profound impact on the students we see coming to Edinburgh College. Creating online communities through Discord, hosting in-person Class Rep Training, running interactive information stalls, and pushing our services outwards across the College, have been an attempt to bridge the gap, and facilitate the transition to a predominantly in-person student experience.

However, it is clear that the experience of interacting from home, connecting digitally, and missing out on some of those key interpersonal experiences over the past few years, has left many students struggling to adjust or learn how to perform in this unfamiliar environment. A lot more work will need to be done, not only to transition students, but to support them to learn and develop in different ways, especially by empowering them to reach out for help and showing them how to seek solutions for the issues they may face. We pride ourselves on being the place where people go to when they don't know who to ask and, this year, that role has been vitally important for many students feeling lost, alone, or unsure for a variety of reasons. We all have a role to play in helping students navigate their way through their College experience, but we hope we have outlined throughout this report how we lead by example in all that we do.



One of the big headline successes of the year has been the introduction of the Breakfast Clubs across the campuses. For an organisation that has been through so much change and lost a lot of experience in a short period of time, I am incredibly proud of the fact we have managed to research, develop, establish and deliver such a vital service for so many students. The project has illustrated the strength of our partnership working with various teams across the College, and has helped us create campus communities where we can regularly engage with students in an informal setting, building relationships and offering a listening ear. Moreover, we have provided almost 20,000 breakfasts since we started, so, by any metric, this has been hugely successful, and an area we hope to work together with the College to develop further next year.

Our Community Fridges and clothing SwapShops have been hugely popular with students this year, settling into a rhythm of sharing approximately 1.5 tonnes of free food and clothing to students every month. A combined estimated total of 11 metric tonnes has been diverted from waste and into students' arms, helping them to save money and engage in sustainable habits that offer a gateway to more environmentally-mindful decisions in their own lives. Being highly commended at both the UK & Ireland Green Gown awards, and the CDN Awards for this work has been the icing on the cake.

Our renewed work on Equality, Diversity, and Wellbeing, has also been an important focus for us over the academic year. The intersectionality between those most vulnerable in society and good physical, mental and emotional wellbeing has been at the core of the work we have delivered. Highlighting the barriers minority groups face, standing up for their rights, and helping them feel part of the wider student and College community can only serve to help tackle stigmas, and improve the student experience for everyone. Whether it is International Women's Day, LGBT+ History Month, Hidden Disabilities Awareness, or our Mental Health Check-In stalls, these activities all have real impact on the students we interact with daily.

A Director's report on the 2022-23 academic year would not be complete without a nod to our 10th birthday celebrations. As much as it has been fun for us all to go through a rebrand, run competitions celebrating our students, and, most popularly, hand out free birthday cake, it has also given us time to reflect.





As an organisation, we have grown into ourselves over the past 10 years, and we can, rightly, look back on being a genuinely sector-leading Students' Association. However, as cheesy as it sounds, it's the students themselves who have demonstrated the real value of what we do. My personal highlight of the year goes to the 67 students who took time to share their personal journeys into and through Edinburgh College in our 10 Student Stories competition. The fascinating diversity of experience and the illustration of enthusiasm, resilience, and tenacity has really blown me away. Moreover, as the sector landscape, the economy, and political environment become more challenging, it serves as a timely reminder of just how incredible our students are, and why we all love doing what we do.

The 2022-23 academic year has not been without its challenges, particularly for the Students' Association. I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank our three Full-Time Officers, David, Skye, and Luna, for their hard work and dedication throughout the year – they have relentlessly advocated for students and approached their work with the enthusiasm and understanding that only elected student officers can. Furthermore, to our staff team of Graham, Genevieve, Ashley, Paige, and the 14 student-staff we have employed, thank you doesn't go nearly far enough for your incredible insight, support, and old-fashioned hard work – you are all a force to be reckoned with when it comes to impact in what we do!

Finally, a huge thank you to the College Senior Management Team, the Board of Management, and all the staff across the College for their ongoing support and commitment to partnership, because, without a team, it's just work.

Al Wilson
Director

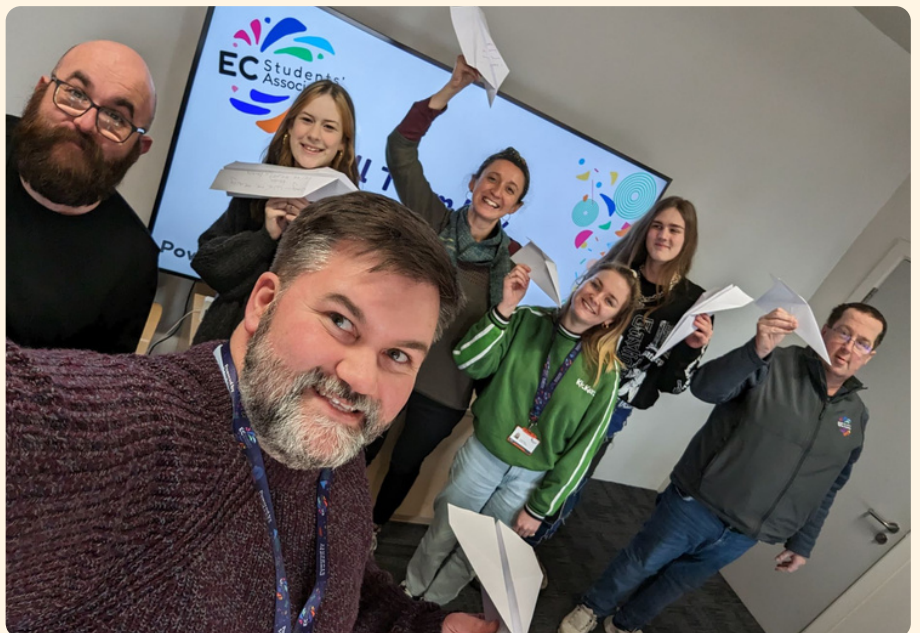




Photo Gallery

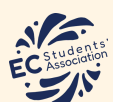
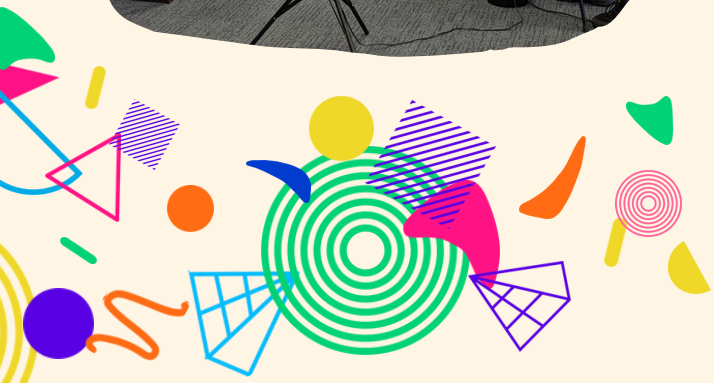




Photo Gallery





Powered by Students,
Driven by values,
Committed to better.



This report was designed by Student Engagement Assistant, Paige Morgan.

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