1. **Question 1.** *'Think back to your experience during the first few weeks of term, what was it like for you enrolling at college? Was it a positive experience? We want to know about the good, and what could be improved from accepting your course to getting 'settled into college life', how easy was that transition?*

   1. **College organisation:** Class Reps highlighted a significant lack of clarity and information & organisation in general at College, around half of the Reps present were not invited to a 'Welcome Week' event, and the others mentioned the feeling in their classes was that the welcome weeks felt rushed and very 'clinical'. Some students highlighted positive experiences of a smooth transition however this seemed to be incredibly inconsistent across enrolment and anecdotal feedback from student at events ECSA have been involved in since week one of term back this up. Students highlighted a lack of clarity about their course, not having timetables, room booking issues leading to a very disorganised first few weeks at college.

   2. **Childcare & Bursary:** is an ongoing issue for students, the implementation of paying the childcare directly to providers has caused several process errors for students. Students highlighting being out of pocket for over £600 due to delayed payments or requirements of deposits upfront to secure places for the year. With no clarity about how this will be reimbursed or a timeline for this. This is students with caring responsibilities, being severely out of pocket and expected to care for themselves and their family.

   3. **Communication:** Class Reps cited a common theme that repeatedly poorly communicated with, or not at all, including whether they had been accepted or not onto a course, some applicants who applied in March did not receive any update until after welcome weeks. Students actively had to 'hound' after an update on their application with no information being provided. A severe lack of professional 'customer' focused service and an information 'black hole'.

   4. **High Quality Learning:** students praised the actual teaching, when here and in spite of all the barriers and problems the college is an overall positive place with good high quality teaching, but several failings and poor organisation has led many of them to have an initial bad experience of induction into college life.

   5. **Class Cover:** half the students present have had a class cancelled in the first 6 weeks of term. Across Sports, Business & Social Science courses. Of those students at least 3 classes have had multiple classes not being covered with no information from teaching teams. Showing up to class, waiting 20 minutes, investigating and only after finding another staff member being told there was no class cover for that day. While staff sickness is inevitable it is the total lack of communication and care taken by teams to ensure students aren't having their time wasted. It's that no one seems to take responsibility (consistently) on what should happen. This frustrates students because it is something that is so easily avoided. Returning reps highlighted this has happened throughout their time at college.

6. **LDT frustrations:** Class Reps noted that while LDTs are supportive in the classroom that LDT's highlighted a frustration in chasing issues, that even as staff they could not get answers or support from departments or staff when trying to support and deal with student issues. This was specifically mentioned at Milton road.

Some quotes from Class Reps about applying to college include 'Stressful, I applied in March and wasn't allowed to test in line with my additional support needs'. A student highlighted 'I waited 15 weeks for travel funding with no communication or clarity from college staff'. Some positive quotes include: '95% of my class are satisfied with how they got enrolled in college and the course is really enjoyable now we are all finally started'.

Question 2. *Have you or any of your classmates had an issue at College that has made you/them consider dropping out? If so, what was the issue? If not, what do you think is the biggest reason for students struggling to stay on their course?'*

1. **Mental Health:** Class Reps expressed concern on all of the issues, having an **impact on students Mental Health**. That not having bursary processed, a clear timetable, effective communication etc. Impacts on their learning and their wellbeing. It was highlighted that the wait times for Student Support at Milton did not meet demand, that at peak times queues are over an hour long and student are turned away, it was noted that if you are in a vulnerable position being told to go away did nothing to help you in that moment and students expressed feeling very undervalued in those moments and hesitant to even come back. The terms 'I feel I need to climb a mountain just to get support'.

2. **Unexplained drop out:** Class Reps noted that some students have just dropped out, many of them did not give a clear answer beforehand, except family struggles/physically not being able to be here. Reps said they did not know how supported these students where, and if any steps could have been taken by the college to retain some of these vulnerable and at risk of dropping out students. ECSA would be interested to see if any of these students had applied for any form of support from the college and this was still pending when they decided to no longer attend this course. ECSA would like to recommend this to be examined further through the college's statistics and reports.

3. **Bursary:** Class Reps repeatedly cited the bottle neck in student funding, long delays and the total sum of financial help available was a major factor for students, rippling into their life and putting students in real financial hardship. This data is in line with ECSA's student submission to the 'Student Support Review' being conducted by the Scottish Government and in line with other findings produced at a national level.

Other comments included:

'Being passed from staff to staff, never hearing back,' 'receiving no communications' and *'feeling like they were unwelcome /not important'*. Many did not feel that the *'student centred'* ethos was fully embedded into day to day operational work.

Question 3. *'Last year the 5 issues were identified by Class Reps (see the PowerPoint slide) as the biggest issues facing students. Are these issues still a problem? Have you or your classmates experienced any of them? Please discuss in small groups.'*

**********As the session progressed it became apparent the 5 key student issues are still prevalent in differing ways for students across the college, and the other questions highlight this with the responses from students. We asked Reps to instead rank how important/impactful the 5 issues are in terms of priority to be tackled by the college as a whole and at a campus level************

Student Issues ranked
1. Student Funding
2. Mental Health
3. Course Organisation
4. Student support
5. It & Resources

Question 4. *Do you think the College and/or ECSA can be doing to remove challenges, support more students to stay on at College and be successful? Discuss in your groups, write your answers below and we will do a group feedback session at the end.*

This document highlights many frustrations students have been feeling and clearly shows students are having an inconsistent experience across the college. However ECSA did discuss with reps what solutions could be put in place to mitigate some of these problems in the future.

1. **A 'who to who guide':** This would be clearer information to give to students regarding who they can see about what, name contact details, job roles of staff. Making this available physically and as a digital version on the student portal. Students are still confused about the roles and highlighted a 'passed from pillar to post' when seeking help.

2. **Clearer communications:** When bursary applications stall, students will wait 2 weeks (the time they are told it will take) before they chase it, they chase it to find out they are missing something or need to provide more evidence but have received no information from the college. Students feel there should be more ownership from student support in consistently being proactive at providing students with the information they need to properly complete their bursary and support applications.

3. **Staff ownership:** Time and time again students have highlighted the 'it's not my problem' attitude from staff across the college. Even well intentioned staff will say things like 'it will be sorted' but not take an active role in dealing with student issues. ECSA would agree with this, the evidence in our case file and recent cases would highlight repeated process failings in basic problems that could have been solved through communication. From course organisation, class cover, bursary applications. A simple response from staff, phone call or speaking within course teams could provide a much more positive student experience and stop the escalation of issues.

4. **Mental Health training**: Not enough staff are trained or effective in dealing with the increasing number of students declaring poor mental health. A focus of a matter of urgency should be reviewing how support is delivered and offered to students seeking, or in need of help. This should be delivered to all front line staff. This also includes staff taking an active role in managing the classroom environment in which some students mentioned can be toxic or strained with personality clashes and hints that 'bullying' is still present in the corridors and classrooms of the college.

5. **Student Support Drop In:** Students suggested that drop in times 'before and after' core teaching time. Would free up the time that students without caring responsibilities (or classes that do not allow them to take leave from classes) to chase up their issues & seek support. This would in turn free up the core and peak times for students who can't access college support out with a narrow window. This could help with the current 'bottleneck' at peak times and the 'turning away' of students that seems to be a daily occurrence, even if this was something offered as a trial basis or done at the beginning of term until such times as the majority of students initial barriers, concerns & issues are sorted which would be a positive step into improving retention, for example the first 8 weeks of term.

6. **CoreSkills level 6:** Students highlighted the lack of support for coreskills post level 5. Many of them said that while they have achieved in the past having been away from education for so long they feel they need refreshers or more support. The opportunity to enrol in a short courses or attend monthly 'curriculum/campus/college wide' refresher sessions and drop in sessions, for core skills like essay writing, maths, presentation skills and IT would benefit them. Even if this is not possible as a top up or add on to their course, providing these materials on the VLE as videos, tutorials or as resources and making it available to all students would mean those that want to can at least get access.

Milton Road total number of registered reps	67
Reps registered with contact information	27
Students who attended	11

Our Class Rep registration process has been repeatedly set out to LDTs and CM/CLs by email – this includes a stipulation that the reps should be registered during the session with them present whenever possible, so as to enable us to collect accurate contact information, and for them to book a training session that suits them.

We do not believe that has been happening consistently – and this is particularly evident at Milton Road.

When a rep is registered it pulls all the information ECSA has on them and displays it to staff, we repeatedly asked staff to complete the key missing information, specifically the contact information. ECSA still has large gaps in this area.

Of the reps we did have information on, 40% attended.

On the whole ECSA has around contact information for around 60% of all reps registered. This means the other 40% are unable to receive any information from ECSA. This is having an impact on our communications and Class Rep attendance. Overall the registration of reps is up, but attendance is down on last year. We hope to have this rectified before the 2nd round of conferences.