EC Students' Association
Class Rep Meeting 2 Report
February 2025

In the week beginning Monday 27th January 2025, we held our second round of Class Rep meetings, with options to join in-person at Sighthill, Granton and Milton Road campuses, as well as two online meeting options. Overall, we gained good attendance at each meeting, with 81 Reps actively participating (up from 68 in January last year). If we take each Class Rep to represent the views of 15 students, in total, 1,215 student views were represented.

Meeting objectives

- To gather feedback about the sense of belonging at Edinburgh College

- To find out what is impacting the Class Reps' overall learning experience

- To present updates and information from EC Students' Association including the upcoming Elections and Student Life Survey

Sense of Belonging at Edinburgh College

Our Class Reps are a key part of the college ecosystem, and their feedback gives us valuable insights into how students are feeling. Our theme for our January meetings was exploring the 'sense of belonging' at Edinburgh College. In this context, 'belonging' means feeling safe and accepted, knowing where to get help and support, and connecting with others by having the right sort of spaces and opportunities to do so. By grouping these conversations under the theme of 'belonging', some interesting feedback emerged, which we hope we will be able to draw upon as we work with the college to enhance the overall student experience.

When Reps were asked if they felt Edinburgh College was a welcoming place, the overwhelming response was positive, with 98% responding 'yes'. When asked what would make the College more welcoming, there were a variety of suggestions:

- More chances to have campus tours at induction, specifically with information pointing out the location of water fountains, gym, library and toilets

- A little more colour on the walls, to make the space less corporate

- Increasing the spaces where students can relax, outside of the main eating areas (see student social spaces section below)

- Increase the opportunities for students to socialise through clubs, societies and events and increase the visibility of the Students' Association

Student quote: "To me the in-college experience has mostly been go into classes, get out, without much room to interact or make friends in person".

When asked "Do you feel you belong at Edinburgh College?" the results showed that the vast majority responded positively (85% said yes, up from 72% last year). Of the remaining responses, 9% responded 'not really or only sometimes' and 4% responded 'no'.

We asked students whether they would like to be involved in activities at college outside of their courses, and gathered the results shown in the chart below.
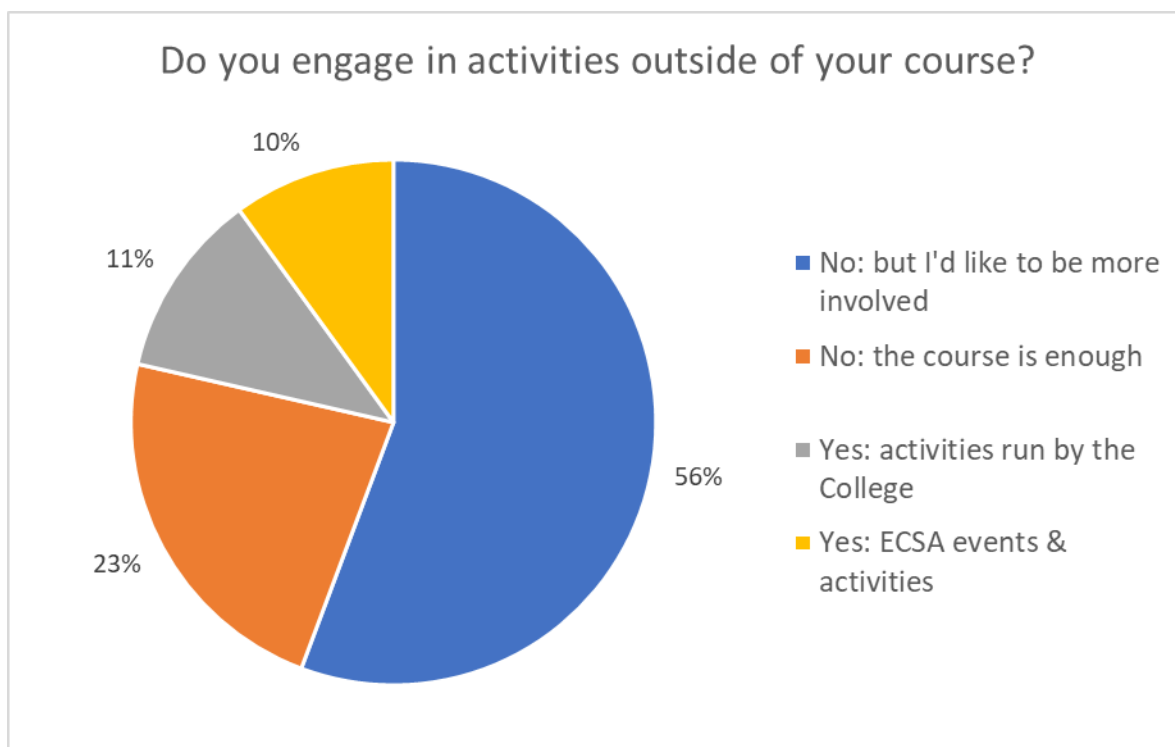
As the chart shows, while 21% of students were already involved in some form of activity, either run by the college or by the Students' Association, the largest group were those who said they were not currently engaging with additional activities but would like to do so. We followed up this question by asking what sort of activities the students would like to participate in, and got a hugely varied response, from sports (volleyball, basketball, swimming and yoga) to networking events (pop-up cafes, study clubs) and creative activities (choir, brass band, crafts, board games and chess).

The main request from students was to have activities that allowed them to meet people from beyond their courses. As expected, a fairly large proportion of Class Reps said that their course was enough, and they didn't feel the need to engage in additional activities.

Student social spaces

Research we conducted with Class Reps last year showed that facilities for students at go hand in hand with increasing a sense of belonging among the student community. At the Sighthill Music box, for instance, the 'ambient' settings such the type of seating and lighting can go a long way to create a comfortable and convivial atmosphere. This in turn encourages students to socialise with their friends and classmates and creates more of a buzz across our campuses. These findings were incorporated into our Student Mental Health Agreement, which was created in collaboration between EC Students' Association and Edinburgh College, and launched in May last year. One of our pledges in the agreement related directly spaces and places for students: *"We pledge to enhance the provision of physical places on campus and safe spaces such as groups and societies, where students can connect with each other socially to enhance their wellbeing".*

To understand further what students want from the proposed social spaces on campus, we have also been running a series of meetings on the 'spaces for students' theme with our Lead Reps. This is a new initiative that brings together enthusiastic Class Reps from each curriculum area, bringing them together to meet more regularly. For a full run-down of the ideas discussed, please see the Lead Rep Report.

In our conversations with Class Reps, it was highlighted several times that more varied areas for studying, for both study groups and quiet individual studying, would be a positive change, with requests for the library to extend its opening hours, as libraries (especially Sighthill) can get very full during lunchtimes. There was a strong desire to see more outside spaces for students to hang out in, adding picnic benches where students can relax, socialise and eat lunch together.

For the final part of this section on belonging, we asked students to respond to the following question, and you can see the diverse range of responses listed in the word cloud below:

"Your friend is due to start at Edinburgh College in August. What three words would you use to describe it to them?"

As is often the case at our Class Rep meetings, the feedback and responses we gain can vary hugely based on each individual's experience, from positive words such as fun, friendly and challenging, to stressful, understaffed and hectic.

This year, we have been meeting with Curriculum Team Managers and Heads of School to try and refresh the way Class Reps work within their curriculum areas. For many Reps, curriculum-specific meetings, usually held once per semester, will be the most useful setting where they can feed back information directly to those in charge of the specifics of their course (rather than going through the Students' Association). We asked Reps whether they had been invited to a meeting with their curriculum staff yet. As the chart below shows, 65% had not. Of the 28% who had, the vast majority of these Class Reps were in Creative Industries courses.

Have you had a Class Rep meeting with curriculum staff yet?

- No
- Not yet, but it's been arranged
- Yes

28%
7%
65%
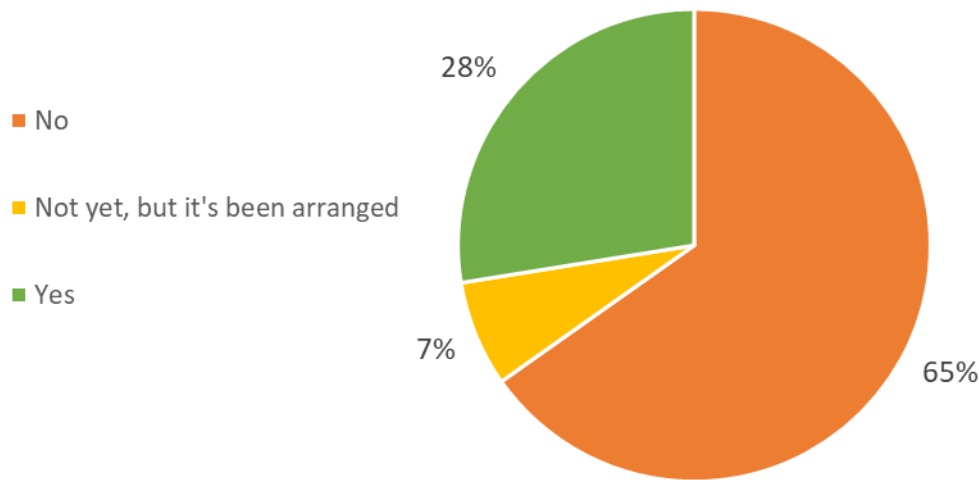
Key issues facing students

Our Class Rep meetings give us a unique opportunity to 'take the temperature' amongst the student body. An important part of this process is allowing Class Reps to raise matters affecting them and the students they represent, and the following issues repeatedly came up.

Cleanliness on Campus	Numerous reps at each campus complained about the cleanliness on campus, especially in the toilets. Student quote: *"I know someone who would rather wait and go to ASDA bathrooms than to college ones".* At Granton, students were concerned that the Hub is getting unhygienic and unwelcoming because students are not clearing up after themselves and using the bins provided.
Staff absence	There was concern around staff absences, either due to illness, or due to them leaving, which is impacting on students' teaching and learning in a significant way. At times, when learning was switched to online, students were not provided with Teams links for meetings in a timely way.
Assessment schedule	Reps mentioned that many people had deadlines and assessments almost immediately after the Christmas break, so it didn't feel like much time to relax and de-stress after a busy first semester.
Facilities issues	• Several people on different campuses complained that there were people smoking and vaping close to the main entrances, making the campuses less welcoming and even intimidating at times. • There was a request for more water fountains, and clear signage to say where they are located on each campus.

	- Several students have expressed disappointment that the on-campus gym facilities at Granton and Sighthill are only accessible to Sport & Fitness students. - There were concerns about toilet doors not locking at Sighthill campus. - Graffiti (sometimes offensive) is a persistent problem in the toilets, especially at Granton campus. - Students are requesting for sanitary products to be made available in the bathrooms themselves, including the disabled toilets. - Students are unaware of how to log a facilities issue, so we are working on a system that means they can report problems then and there, which will be combined with a poster campaign
Wi-Fi	Wi-Fi is still patchy and causing issues for students on campus, specifically in classrooms/learning spaces. This creates issues when students don't have the option to use data, and disrupts their learning.
Communications	Students are sometimes unaware of the events and activities that are available for them to take part in. Students requested ECSA revamp/bring back the Discord server as a useful means of communication about events, rather than having it solely run and facilitated by students.
Catering	Concern was raised on the lack of healthy options available for students on campus. Milton students also highlighted the cost of items from the Gather & Gather café.
Disparities between campuses	There was a feeling that the larger campuses have more events and activities, better social spaces and catering options. Milton reps felt particularly strongly about this.
Timetabling	Semester 2 timetables were generally fine by late January, but there were some issues with students who were left with long gaps between classes, meaning they have to spend the whole day at college for only 3 hours of lessons. Another issue was when the timetable is spread over too many days in the week, this prevents people from being able to peruse part-time work.

Have your say

At every Class Rep meeting, we ask our Class Reps to respond to the same series of statements reflecting on their overall experience at Edinburgh College. Respondents rated a series of statements on a scale of 1 – 5, where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". We ask these questions via Mentimeter and students answer anonymously. The chart below shows the data this year, compared to the same set of questions that we asked Class Reps in January 2024.

Statement	Weighted Average Score (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)							
	Sighthill 2024	Sighthill 2025	Granton 2024	Granton 2025	Milton Rd 2024	Milton Rd 2025	Online 2024	Online 2025
At Edinburgh College I feel cared about as a student	3.4	3.8	3.3	4	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.6
My course and classes have met my expectations	3.1	4	4	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.1	4.4
I feel positive about the College facilities	3	3.4	2.9	3.9	2.7	3.1	2.7	3.3
I feel positive about the online learning environment	2.5	2.6	2.6	3.3	2.6	3.3	2.6	3.4
Since November, College has been going smoothly	3.1	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.9	2.9	3.5
The College communicates well with students	2.2	3.2	2.8	2.9	2.4	3.2	2.1	3
I'm glad I chose to come to Edinburgh College	3.3	4.4	3.8	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	4.9

There is a strong trend here towards improvement from last year. These results are as we would expect, given the large amount of disruption that faced students at the start and throughout 2023-24 with industrial action. The only campuses that demonstrated a decline in specific areas were Granton and Milton Road.

Milton Road's scores declined in three areas: feeling cared about, courses meeting expectations, and being glad to have come to Edinburgh College. At Granton, there was also a slight decline in courses having met expectations, as well as in response to "Since November, College has been going smoothly." It is worth bearing in mind however, that all of these scores remain on the positive side of the scale, above 3 out of 5.

Looking specifically at the 2025 data, the lowest scoring areas overall were:

- the online learning environment (average 3.15)
- the college's communications with students (average 3.10)
- the facilities (average 3.4)

The highest scoring areas was "I'm glad I chose to come to Edinburgh College" with an overall average score of 4.53 out of 5.

Updates from us

Elections

Our Class Rep meetings are an active channel for distributing important information from both the College and the Students' Association to students. During the January meetings, our focus was on promoting the EC Students' Association Elections, which are taking place on the w/c 17th March. Our current President, Adam Lowe, shared his views on what the experience had been like and encouraged potential candidates to ask questions.

We will be circulating more information about running and voting in the coming weeks, both to Class Reps through our Teams channel, and to the wider student body as a whole. We are grateful to Learning Development Tutors and everyone who is spreading the word about Elections.

Student Life Survey

Our Student Life Survey, which aims to get a broad picture of the challenges students are facing, is returning for its second year and we are keen to encourage Class Reps to play their part in promoting it. There are sections on digital resources, travel, housing, finance and housing, but the survey also explores the sense of belonging at Edinburgh College, following on from the conversations we had at Class Rep meetings.

Many of the questions remain the same from last year's survey, so we hope that the comparison of data we collect can help us see some continuing and emerging trends of the big challenges facing students. Last year, the survey gathered 629 responses, which was a high level of engagement for surveys of this type. We hope to exceed that this year and as of time of writing we have 345 responses with 6 weeks still remaining.

Class Rep Engagement

As we only meet our Class Reps a few times per academic year, it is important for us that we make the experience as engaging and valuable as possible for them. At the end of every meeting, we ask the Reps to rate whether they felt the meeting was useful. Out of the 62 people who responded to this question:

- 2% said not at all useful

- 44% said somewhat useful

- 55% said very useful

We would like to see more people moving from 'somewhat useful' into 'very useful', and had some feedback that it would be good to hear what had come of the feedback from the previous meeting – perhaps in a 'you said, we did' format. We plan to incorporate this into the next round of meetings, which will be taking place in May. We will also be asking Reps to reflect on how the Class Rep community could be improved at our next meeting.

Conclusion

The Class Rep system continues to be an invaluable tool for gaining feedback about the student experience and as a conduit of useful information between the College Management, the Students' Association and the student body. This report has focused on the outcomes of questions we asked the Class Reps around belonging, which has indicated that:

- Most Reps feel Edinburgh College is a welcoming place where they feel they belong

- More can be done in terms of co-curricular opportunities and the spaces we provide, to enhance student life and the inclusivity of our campus spaces

Generally, while the experience has been broadly positive and has improved since this time last year, there are some persistent issues that were consistently mentioned across Granton, Milton Road and at online meetings.

- Cleanliness on campus, especially in the eating areas, and the toilets.
- Raising awareness within the student community of the opportunities, activities and events that are available to them
- Lack of social spaces

Along with the data shown above, we have also collected individualised feedback from each meeting, which we are taking forward with staff and individual students. We aim to try and resolve any issues promptly, by working in partnership with College staff.

We will take these learnings further and this report will be circulated to the Student Success Committee in advance of their meeting on Thursday 6th March. This report will also be circulated to all Class Reps and to the College's Senior Management Team, and made available on the Class Reps webpage.