

September 2023

You may have read some misleading accounts about the College, its finances and operational matters. This document is your source of factual information on these topics.

Learning Support Continues

Contrary to some inaccurate claims, the College continues to offer a comprehensive learning support service and we have actually enhanced provision in this area. We now have a central team of 11 Learning Support and Development Advisors working directly with students to assess their needs and identify reasonable adjustments that will support their learning experience.

The team works alongside students to agree individual support plans and then works with faculty teams to offer appropriate and individualised learning support. This process has been in place for a number of years and the number of Advisors has been increased this year to support the increasing number of students requiring support. Further information on Learning Support is available on CityLife.

Canvas and Online Learning

The College is committed to a 'blended learning' approach, which is a mixture of onsite and online learning. These approaches will be chosen and used by individual curricular teams based on what they feel is best suited for their class. At no point will any student be forced into fully online courses.

Our Virtual Learning Environment ('Canvas') is an important and valued tool for delivering education at the College. It provides inclusive and accessible material for all our students. A recent report following the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit highlighted that providing learners with a choice of learning environments was "*helping learners to develop their full potential and is contributing positively to attainment*". Education Scotland also noted that "*Almost all learners make good use of Canvas and find it helpful and easy to use*".

Removing Learning Material from Canvas

Earlier this year, EIS-FELA instructed their members to remove learning materials from Canvas. This action

targets students during a time when they are sitting assessments and working on their graded units, which is simply unfair on our students. The learning material belongs to the College not the lecturer, so this should never happen.

Additionally, this action disproportionately impacts students with additional support needs, and it is imperative that we comply with the Equalities Act and provide inclusive and accessible materials for all our students; removal of materials violates such policies.

Reduction in Class Time

Following consultation across a range of key stakeholders, including a review of other colleges' allocation of hours, the College reviewed the structure of the academic year early in academic year 22/23. The outcome included the provision of a global number of hours to curricular teams, providing them with the flexibility to decide the allocation of those hours to units. The small reduction in teaching time amounts to less than 40 minutes a week for full-time FE, and a reduction of circa 1.25 hours a week for full-time HE over the academic year. Again, many colleges across the sector have made similar reductions.

This change gives lecturers more flexibility and allows them to provide more time for classes which may need further support, while also giving students more time to develop independent learning skills and work on assessments and coursework outside of class. More class teaching hours have already been lost from EIS-FELA strikes than from the changes to timetables introduced this academic year.

Timetabling / Lecturers' Workload

The College has been consistently clear that there will be no changes to core hours as a result of organisational changes, and we have repeatedly said that no lecturer will be expected to work outwith the nationally agreed terms and conditions, specifically 35 hours per week, inclusive of 23+1 hours class contact



time. Any lecturer who works above those hours is entitled to additional hours payment.

Tea Breaks

Teaching and support staff in the College have always received a paid tea break, and the College has confirmed that this is to continue.

Paid tea breaks for lecturers are not included in Class Contact time, which was negotiated and agreed nationally in November 2017. The College continues to ensure that staff receive their paid morning and afternoon break each day within the paid 35 hours per week, thereby complying with the agreed national terms.

Financial Crisis in College Sector

All Scottish colleges face substantial funding and financial challenges from real-term cuts, plus high energy, inflation and staff costs. Despite claims that only City of Glasgow College are reducing courses and staff numbers, voluntary severance schemes and proposals for compulsory redundancies are being brought forward across the country as other colleges address their own deficits. Edinburgh, Dundee & Angus and UHI Colleges are all also unfortunately discussing or bringing forward proposals for redundancies and, sadly, others are likely to follow. As you would expect, City is further down the track with our organisational changes and in returning to a more sustainable financial position, but the sector as a whole is facing substantial financial and funding difficulties.

EIS-FELA is campaigning nationally for colleges to receive a fairer funding settlement and for the funding crisis to be resolved – which the College has been calling for in discussions with Scottish Government ministers and opposition politicians for many years – so they recognise as well that all colleges are facing a funding crisis.

The funding shortfall facing the College is entirely down to external factors and has absolutely nothing to do with decisions we have or have not made. [Audit Scotland recently reported that funding cuts are putting the college sector's financial sustainability at risk.](#) Regrettably, this significant and unsustainable real-term cuts in public funding left us with no credible alternative to bringing forward proposals for compulsory redundancies. It remains a matter of deep regret that we have been forced to take this action for the first time in our history.

Spending

As a public body in receipt of taxpayers' money from the Scottish Government, the College is scrutinised annually on how we invest our money. Every last penny we spend is audited internally and externally by independent bodies to ensure we are investing in the

best possible way to enhance our students' experience, generate additional income – which helps save jobs – and enable the College to Let Learning Flourish.

It is utterly misleading to suggest that College spend in previous years is connected to the funding crisis all colleges are currently facing this year, as we receive one-year settlements and cannot build up our reserves in good years nor borrow. We have repeatedly called for colleges to be given the flexibility to build up savings and borrow, but this has been rejected by government.

International Partnerships

We have successful partnerships in Scotland, the UK and all over the world delivering life-enhancing skills and qualifications for tens of thousands of students each year. The College has a proud tradition of exporting educational services and these partnerships help maintain our long-term financial stability as well as securing diversity of income and sustainable development.

There are some inaccurate claims being made around two projects in particular, one in India and another in Saudi Arabia:

In India, before COVID, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Scottish Institute of Hospitality Sciences (SIHS) to deliver courses in hospitality, culinary and cabin crew operations; but the global pandemic derailed their construction of the campus facility in the northern Indian state of Maharashtra, so the project has been suspended. The College has not spent a single penny of our own money on this venture to date, as the full costs of our due diligence on the project was met by SIHS. We believe that this project can still yield financial benefits for the College.

The other partnership is with Qobalak in Saudi Arabia, an international education agency that works with many universities and colleges across the UK & Europe; and they have questioned the financial benefits of this development. However, in the pilot phase, the College generated a net profit of **£135,473 (22% profit)** through this partnership, and the projected maximum income from the next phase of the project is a potential **net profit** of almost **£1.2 million (30% profit)**.

Such international educational partnerships increase much-needed non-government funded revenue and are vital in safeguarding jobs in the College. Like most UK educational establishments, we welcome students from across the world and participate in a range of mutually beneficial initiatives. We value the diversity, the spirit of collaboration, and innovation this brings to the College and its student population.

When assessing the compatibility of working with overseas partners a robust due diligence process is undertaken including reviewing government guidance to ensure compliance. Current UK Government policy



explicitly encourages educational partnerships with Saudi Arabia.

Public and Charitable Status

The College's Management and Board are very proud of our charitable and public sector status. This is something to cherish and protect and we remain fully committed to being in the public sector. The scaremongering around privatisation is completely unfounded and simply ludicrous. In addition, the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government also remain utterly committed to a national college public sector.

Strike Action as a 'Last Resort'

While EIS-FELA insist they go out on strike only as a last resort, they are currently out on strike for the eighth time in 10 years. Striking and resulting boycotts are their default positions. EIS-FELA have been also undertaking national Action Short of Strike (ASOS) – including a resulting boycott – since May, which is ultimately impacting on our students' ability to progress into employment or onto higher education. Resulting boycotts at universities have been suspended by the lecturers' trade union, University and College Union, and EIS-FELA should also suspend this action for the sake of our students.

The resulting boycott adversely affects students: and the continued ASOS and local strikes are causing widespread disruption to students, and putting their pathways and futures at risk.

Personalised attacks

Sadly, there is a personal element to some of EIS-FELA'S attacks, with the Principal and members of the Board of Management often targeted and demonised. College Management and our Board respect the right of staff and trade unions to strike and believe in freedom of expression, but disrespectful personal attacks are unacceptable.

Our non-executive members of the Board are unpaid volunteers who generously contribute their time, skills and expertise to guide the strategic direction of the College. They certainly don't deserve to be unfairly attacked publicly or on social media platforms.

International Travel

Every aspect of College spend is fully examined internally, externally and by independent bodies, with details openly published.

As a world-renowned college with international students, significant levels of income are generated for the College through our partnerships overseas, and this money in turn is spent on enhancing our students' learning experience and maintaining a world-class study environment.

As the College's leader, the Principal is sometimes required to seal these lucrative partnerships which greatly benefit all our students and protect staff jobs. Our Principal plays a pivotal role in successfully developing and maintaining these external partnerships – both internationally and across the UK. Over the past five years the Principal's modest investment of some £5,000 per year in travel and subsistence has helped generate over £5 million each year through these vital partnerships.

COP26

When Glasgow hosted COP26 back in 2021, the College was in a much healthier financial position than today. As public sector bodies, colleges are not permitted to build up reserves or retain surpluses, so our investment in holding official COP26 events is entirely unconnected to the purely external factors causing the College's current financial challenges today. Put simply, we had money to invest which generated income, added terrific reputational value for the College, and crucially, provided excellent work experiences and connections for our students. The College was right to capitalise on such an incredible opportunity.

The events we hosted at COP26, and subsequently as a direct result of hosting them, generated over £100,000 for the College with more events still in the pipeline. By hosting the International Maritime Hub at our Riverside campus, we positioned the College as a global leader in maritime skills and training during the largest global event ever held anywhere in the UK.

Over 800 of our students directly benefited from COP26 projects, working on industry placements/course projects and in paid work. Many of these students are still working with those partners, so it was a positive, life-changing experience for many of them.

In addition, the College won awards for our COP26 activity, including Research Project of the Year for Oxygen Depletion, which was showcased during COP26, has received multiple industry endorsements and has saved lives in the maritime sector.

