

**Minutes of the International Standing Committee held at 4.30pm
Tuesday 15 October 2024
Online via Teams**

Present: Ann Cormack, Convener of ISC
Max Browning
Gordon Cairns, Convener of the Business Committee
William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
Alison McNulty, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Convener welcomed those present to the first meeting of the session to agree the programme of work for the International Standing Committee for 2024-25.

2. Apologies

Apologies received from Nikhil Agarwal, Richard Andrews, Mary Gunn and Bruce Nelson.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2024

The minute had been previously circulated and was approved.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of 7 May 2024

Item 2:10 and 2:12

Relates to alumni engagement and the need to be realistic about existing resources and to be clear where to focus activity;

Item 3

It was felt that the University's partnerships within SE Asia varied in size and quality, and previous online discussion with members of ISC had raised the question of why some of these partnerships were regarded as 'strategic' as opposed to a relationship which exists, for example, at School level as the driver of some of these links.

5. Meeting to discuss Work Plan for ISC 2024-25

- Paper 2 had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. After receiving feedback from members unable to attend the initial planning meeting, the two main outcomes for this academic year were identified as follows:
 1. The ISC will have supported the reduced Development & Alumni (D&A) team in enlivening alumni clubs and networks in their practical support of the university in their geography;
 2. had a positive effect on international reputation through the ISC members' ambassadorial role locally, and via alumni clubs, and by encouraging a systemic approach to addressing academic staff satisfaction rates as well as the specific areas for improvement identified from student feedback.
- The discussion touched upon delays to the Global Strategy and underscored the importance of recruiting a VP International, or re-assigning the responsibilities of the role, and clear, international strategy implementation guidance from the University's leadership with consequent measurement and reporting to track success or otherwise;
- WD reported that meetings of the University's Global Executive had been twice postponed since the departure of Professor James Smith in his role as VP International;
- Engage with senior University colleagues with related areas of responsibility e.g., Provost, who is leading on some of these aspects in the absence of a VP International; University Secretary, who has oversight of Student Services and Development and Alumni; or Rona Smith, Deputy

Secretary for Governance and Strategic Planning, to seek clarification about the current status of the international strategy and address the noted gaps in partnership strategy and operations;

- MG had previously raised the question of University funding to recognise and support alumni clubs/hubs and encourage membership growth, but the variation in size and quality of these organisations and the difference in fundraising culture in the UK, as compared with, for example, the United States, would indicate that this was unlikely to happen;
- MB talked about potentially better ways that EUSA could collect feedback from all students about their experience at the University;
- MB also raised concerns from the student perspective about the lack of adequate support for international students, including career prospects and language challenges, suggesting better access to proper support available for non-native speakers and better career guidance/clarity around visa arrangements to allow students from other countries the right to live and work in the UK after graduation, while also recognising that having an Edinburgh degree is intrinsically valuable;
- There is the sense that the University relies upon the broad appeal of the city of Edinburgh to encourage students to study there, but the environment is not always conducive to allow them to develop the skills needed to participate properly;
- Many international students - who are paying high fees - feel they are not getting value for money and this could influence the University's international reputation and potential recruitment;
- WD reported that the University has retained its place at number 29 in the international league tables but student satisfaction remains a significant challenge;
- There was some discussion on improving assessment feedback mechanisms between students and staff using digital tools like apps to measure how often students receive feedback, while also recognising the importance of the quality of the feedback;
- Suggestions included integrating this functionality into existing student apps, such as the one EUSA currently uses;
- ASC has a meeting on 19 November with the EUSA President, which can address some of these issues.

Action: -

AC will contact Christina Boswell, VP Research and Enterprise, to follow up from the BC meeting of 10 October, and discuss how the Innovation and Research Strategy aligns with the wider International Strategy framework and invite her to a future meeting of ISC;

Secretary to invite Professor Kim Graham, Provost, to the next meeting of ISC on 31 March 2025 to discuss updates to the Global Strategy;

Secretary to invite Chris Cox to the final meeting of ISC on 12 May 2025 - along with Christina Boswell – to look at engagement with international alumni clubs.

6. Any other competent business

WD suggested that AC should contact Alice Brown (Convener, PASC) before a planned meeting with Chris Cox, VP Philanthropy, to ensure a consistent approach towards the desired objectives of both committees.

7. Date of next meeting

Monday 31 March at 4.30pm online via Teams.