



IMPACT REPORT

2023-24

**Powered by students.
Driven by values.
Committed to better.**



Contents

3. President's Welcome

4. Our Top 10 for the Year

6. Education

18. Activities

25. Support

34. Equalities

38. Sustainability

43. Director's Notes

48. Photo Gallery



President's Welcome

Skye Marriner

The past two years as an elected Full-time Student Officer have been one the most incredible and testing experiences of my life. Building a Students' Association and student engagement back after what felt like an eternity of isolation, only to be faced with lecturer strikes and a cost-of-living crisis that was kicking us all in the ass.

Despite all of it, I'm very proud to present our Impact Report for 2023-2024 detailing all of our activity and achievements throughout this year. I think it is important to highlight just how small our Students' Association team is before reading this report. With a small, but mighty team of seven people consisting of three officers, three full-time staff and our Director, Al Wilson, we have been able to cover all four campuses and represent 25,000 students as well as working on committees, projects and partnerships across the college, the sector, and the country. When you read this report with that in mind, you truly see the incredible impact we are able to have, despite our size.

I had never seen myself as a career woman until I started at EC Students' Association and I had always been told that my strengths were in speaking and having an opinion. Well, it turns out that you can make a career out of that! We have had a year of attending protests, conferences, hosting wellbeing events and my personal favourite, bringing people together.

We are so incredibly proud of the relationship work that we have focussed on over the past year. Building, not only a stronger relationship between the Board of Management, Senior Management Team, and the Students' Association, but creating transparent and direct lines between people at the top of the College and students on the ground.

This is our legacy and work that I am excited to see develop for years to come. I truly hope that we have done you proud and shown you the true strength and beauty of my favourite saying *"The people united will never be defeated."*

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'S' and 'M'.

Skye Marriner
President 2023-24

Our top 10 for the year

Clubs & Societies Launched

We launched several Clubs & Societies to provide students with a chance to socialise. Tabletop Games club, Video Games club and our LGBTQ+ society have seen regular engagement on Sighthill, Milton Road and Granton.



Reverse Shadowing with the Board of Management

We've welcomed Edinburgh College's Board Members to join us for the day, inviting them to gain new perspectives on the real-life student experience at Edinburgh College.



Wellbeing Fairs

This year's Wellbeing Fairs have been bigger and better than ever, taking place on our largest campuses and involving more than 20 external partners and charities from across Edinburgh and beyond.

Awareness Days

We're committed to spreading the word about key awareness days throughout the year and have run stalls across the college to mark causes as diverse as LGBT+ History Month, Anti-Bullying Week, International Women's Day, Earth Day, and Mental Health Awareness Week.



Competitive Student Elections

At this year's Student Elections, every position was contested, and it was the second highest voter turnout on record, with 1084 students having their say on who should lead their Students' Association next. We're excited to be working with Adam Lowe (President), Caitlin Whitson (VP Activities) and Sukinder Landa (VP Welfare) from July.

Our top 10 for the year

Freshers' Fairs

In early September, we held our first full-scale Freshers' Fairs since 2019, with lots of external partners coming in to share goodies with students, and start the term with a bang.



Protests and Rallies

Our student officer team Skye, Luna, and Jon, spoke up for students at numerous protests and rallies this year, from the NUS Stop the Cuts Rally to Trans Rights protests at the Scottish Parliament.



Events During the Holidays

For the first time ever, we decided to try out full days of activities for students during the holidays. We started with Video Games Day in February Break, and followed up with another day of crafting and gaming in the Easter holidays. Students were fuelled up with pizza and good company.



New Trustee Board

March this year saw our first full meeting of our newly appointed Board of Trustees. We welcomed Heather Innes, Kirsten Koss, and Garry Quigley as our External Trustees, while Dean Reilly and Mikey Taylor joined us as our Student Trustees.



Class Rep Engagement & Student Life Survey

Engagement with our Class Rep community has gone from strength to strength this year, with Reps getting involved in additional opportunities, such as focus groups, Education Scotland visits, and encouraging others to complete our Student Life Survey, which had 629 responses.

Education

Our Education Highlights

Reverse Shadowing Scheme for Board Members

Our Reverse Shadowing Scheme began with a simple premise: to allow the college's leadership to come face-to-face with the realities of being an Edinburgh College student. The scheme was also a key priority for Skye, our President, to build relationships between the College Board of Management and the Students' Association.

Over the course of the year, seven Board Members have taken part, and we're thrilled they could experience a slice of Students' Association life. Our Board Members got involved in just about every activity we could throw at them, from restocking our Community Fridge to listening to student feedback at Class Rep meetings, from chatting to students and external partners at our Wellbeing Fair (one of the largest events of the year), to getting hands-on with crafts on International Women's Day. Some great conversations about strategy and direction took place, and our relationship with the College's leadership is stronger than ever as a result.



We plan to extend the scheme throughout the next academic year, opening it up to the Senior Management Team, so that we can continue to facilitate meaningful interactions between students and the key decision makers in Edinburgh College.



"It exceeded my expectations. The EC Students' Association team were very engaging and helpful, and I had the opportunity to visit some areas of the campus that I hadn't seen previously, and also to see the students and teaching staff in action."

Participating Board Member

Class Reps

The Class Rep system is a vital part of making the student voice heard by the college's leadership and management team, and this year we've been working on building up the Class Rep community, offering opportunities for them to meet online and in-person.

Over the course of this academic year, 548 students registered as Class Reps, with 261 attending a Class Rep training session either online, via a Moodle course, or in-person. This year we've focused all our Class Rep communications on MS Teams, which has been an effective way of keeping our Reps engaged and informed.

We also invited our Reps to get involved with additional activities, including Education Scotland visits, feedback sessions with the College's Development team, and a dedicated focus group set up for our younger learners, to try and understand some of the unique challenges facing students aged between 16-19 years old.

Overall, the feedback we've gathered from meetings has been hugely rich and useful for identifying key issues faced by students this year, and some of the key emerging themes are highlighted in the following sections.



Strikes

Strike Action has of course been a big part of discussions with Class Reps this year. We have been keeping Reps informed of updates as soon as we are aware of them.

At the start of the year, a high proportion of our Reps felt that their induction had been negatively impacted by strike action. Some students felt elements of their courses have been rushed through or disorganised, reporting high drop-out rates as a result of the disruption in the first six weeks of term.

The national strike action has now also being escalated at the end of the academic year, and some students are concerned about how the strikes and resulting boycott will impact their progression from college. We have been as open as possible with Class Reps and the wider student community, providing ways for them to report how the industrial action has been impacting them, and drawing on their experiences in conversations with the Board and Senior Management.



Facilities

Throughout the year, Class Reps raised issues with college facilities, many of which, such as overcrowded classrooms and broken whiteboards, were fixed soon after they were raised. However, there were a number of issues that resurfaced throughout the year, including:

- Timetabling issues with rooms, such as classes in a room without a window for two back-to-back classes, or being in a classroom beneath a dance studio, leading to noise and students being unable to concentrate.
- Communal areas are frequently loud and crowded, students feel there are few places to relax or study quietly or in small groups.
- Student computers on campus don't always have the relevant software for specific courses.
- Students requested that the campus library could be open later into the evenings.
- Quiet Rooms were being misused by students as a social area, rather than a respite space where overstimulated students can decompress.



Access Needs

Perhaps more concerning than these general facilities observations are the implications for students with access needs, especially wheelchair users.

- Lifts were frequently out of service, especially at Granton and Sighthill, and there are some instances of lifts being misused by people who don't necessarily need to use them.
- There were Health & Safety concerns for disabled students who were left at refuge points during fire drills.
- The Quiet Room at Granton is not wheelchair accessible.
- Recently, the computers desks on the streets at Granton were replaced, and the wheelchair accessible desks were removed without warning.



We have been working closely with disabled students to advocate for them throughout the year, and though incremental improvements have been made, college life for students who use wheelchairs is very different from those who do not.

(Mis)communications

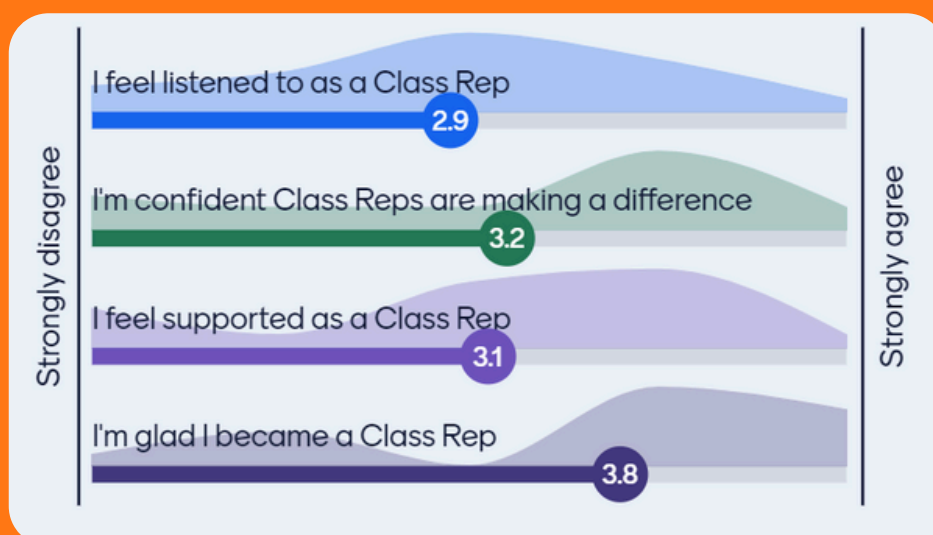
Class Reps raised that there were too many different modes of communication used by the College, lecturers and LDTs. Emails, MS Teams messages and groups, Moodle notifications, the MyEC app means that important communications are getting lost. MS Teams was generally preferred as the means of communication for students, while Moodle was considered the best place for lecturers to host learning materials and resources.

Disparities Between Campuses

There was a feeling that the college is biased towards the larger campuses, both in terms of the activities that take place and the choice of catering options available. On the catering offer, students felt that there was a lack of healthy options, and that they would appreciate more variety, such as vegan, vegetarian, and halal options.

Class Rep Feedback

Towards the end of Semester 2, we asked Class Reps to fill out a short survey about their experience. While their responses were mixed, they felt broadly positive about the experience and many felt glad they had become Reps.



Elections

EC Students' Association's annual elections took place in March. Overall, we received six nominations for the three Full-Time Officer posts (two per position). This was the first time since 2020 that every post was contested. We're grateful to each and every student who took the time to vote, and to all the candidates who made a monumental effort campaigning over the course of the week.

Having run polling stations on all four campuses, we gained our highest voter turnout since 2016, with 1,084 students having their say on who should lead the Students' Association next year.



Our New Full-Time Officer Team for 2024-25

President - Adam Lowe

Adam is currently studying UAL Level 3 Foundation Diploma Art and Design at Granton campus.

Vice President Activities - Caitlin Whitson

Caitlin is currently studying HND Music at Sighthill campus.

Vice President Welfare - Sunkinder Landa

Sukinder is currently studying HND Digital Design and Development at Granton campus.



We're looking forward to welcoming the all-new Officer team, who will take up their posts for a full year on Monday 1st July 2024. Our time will begin with our annual residential training trip to Stirling, where we'll focus on team building and setting our priorities for the year ahead.

Rally for Education

In February, the President and Vice Presidents led a delegation of Edinburgh College students at the Rally for Education outside the Scottish Parliament. The rally was organised by the National Union of Students Scotland to protest the Scottish Government's plans to cut almost £100 million from college and university budgets next year.

Lecturer trade union EIS-FELA were also in attendance, and speakers included several MSPs, the President of NUS Scotland, and our own President, Skye Marriner, speaking on behalf of College Students' Associations.

The fight goes on, but we are proud to play our part in making student voices heard at a national level.



AI and Turnitin

As AI technology continues to change the future of education, we've been supporting students to understand new rules brought in by the college, now that the Turnitin system is using an AI writing indicator on student submissions. Working with the college's Learning Technologies team, we have jointly tested the system to ensure we can be confident that the AI detection system isn't generating false positives.

We have also supported students accused of using AI through the academic malpractice process since AI detection was enabled, which has raised some questions on good practice and potential changes to procedure.

New System for Student Feedback

Since April, we have been working with the Vice Principal Innovation Planning & Performance, as well as Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement, and the Assistant Principal Student Experience, to create a new Student Feedback Tracker. The aim of this system is to capture important feedback on issues impacting the student body, to monitor the actions which are taken, and to help the college have a clear plan for how to respond to student feedback.

We are feeling positive about this new development, as it opens up a new dialogue between Edinburgh College and the Students' Association. The tracker shows at-a-glance which areas are performing well and which issues remain unresolved. It is also a streamlined way of assigning responsibility to staff members as and when feedback arises, to ensure persistent problems are resolved and prevented at the earliest opportunity. The Tracker will also be used in the college's committee system, and therefore will play a key part in closing the feedback loop with students, and ensuring accountability at every level of management.

Activities

Our Activities Highlights

Freshers' Fairs

At the start of term, we organised the biggest set of Freshers' Fairs since the pandemic. With a range of commercial and charity partners taking part, we engaged with thousands of students to welcome them to the college and introduce them to college life.

We were joined by college colleagues, such as the Wellbeing team, to help promote the services they offer to students.



Clubs & Societies

We started the year with eight ideas for clubs and societies, getting a good interest from students for all of them when they were asked to sign up online. This included:

- Video Games Club
- Music Club
- Photography Club
- Tabletop Games Club
- Crafternoon Club
- LGBTQIA+ Society
- Worldwide Students' Society
- Student Parents' Society

We launched these in September and October, with some having more in-person turnout than others. Although not all of them took off or had consistent turnout after the end of Semester 1, a few of the clubs had a great, consistent attendance, such as the Tabletop Games Club (who meet every Wednesday at Granton), Video Games Club (every week between Milton and Sighthill) and the LGBTQIA+ Society (once a month at Granton).

On top of these, we also had some successful Crafternoon Clubs, including a couple of pop-ups!



Halloween Competition

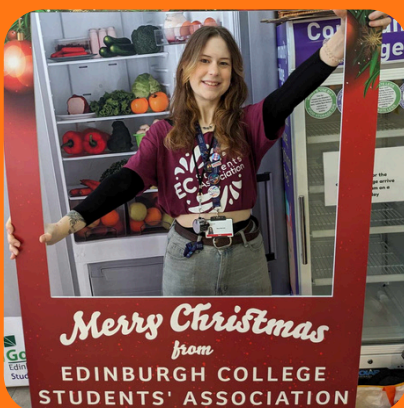
At Halloween, we thought it would be fun to get students involved in a creative competition. Our team couldn't decide on costumes or pumpkin carving, so we decided to do both! We had 10 submissions for costumes and seven for pumpkin carving. Winners were decided by a vote within the team, and each won a £50 Amazon voucher!

Shae McGee was our costume competition winner and our pumpkin carving competition winner was Tash Williamson.



Christmas Crafts

We wanted to do something a little different for Christmas this year, so we decided to do a pop-up stall to give out hot chocolate (with marshmallows and cream, of course!) and candy canes. We also wanted to see some festive cheer from students, so we had everything needed for students to decorate cookies with Christmas-coloured icing pens. We had some really enthusiastic students taking part and saw some fun designs! In total, we spread the Christmas cheer to 81 students.



Video Games Events

As Video Games Club was one of our most popular and well attended, we decided to try something different at the beginning of this year, to give these students more opportunities to play. In the February break, we hosted a whole day of gaming for students at Sighthill, which included tournaments, and treating them to pizza for lunch. This was a very successful event, with a turnout of 21 highly engaged students.

We ran another activity day in the Easter break, by setting up some crafting projects alongside the gaming. This event had an even better turnout, with 24 students taking part.



Afterwards, a student reflected: "The games/craft meet was a lot of fun. Was only going to stay like an hour but ended up staying for the whole thing. Lovely meeting some people. Pizza was a bonus too." We hope to deliver more activity days in the holidays, and we even have an end-of-year day planned in June, so we can get a few of the clubs together one last time for some fun!

"The event is super fun. Having a grand time. Hoping we get more of these sorts of things in the not-so-distant future... Pizza, Mario Kart and a lot of nice people."

Participating Student

Lunchtime Lego

To try something else a bit different in the second semester, we organised a 'Lunchtime Lego' session at both Sighthill (in the Atrium) and Granton (in the Hub), to give students the opportunity to do something fun without committing to staying after classes. The events went well, with a variety of students opting to take part for the full hour, some building specific sets, and some just putting bits together for fun. Everyone had great fun and we were really impressed by their Lego skills!



Edinburgh College Leavers' Hoodies

Following requests from some of our Class Reps, we decided to collaborate with the college to provide students with an opportunity to buy leavers hoodies. This kind of initiative has helped to spread a bit of positivity during assessment season, and also helps students to feel a sense of belonging to the wider college community, rather than just their class or course.

Support

Our Support Highlights

Student Life Survey Results

Between February and April this year, we ran our Student Life Survey. In total, 629 students completed the survey, which touched upon different parts of student life, from housing to finances, travel and transport, as well as a sense of belonging at Edinburgh College. We're grateful for everyone who took the time to respond, and we now have a wealth of data from students about what's impacting them most, which will help with planning for next year.

Some of the key headlines from the survey results reveal that:

- Most respondents feel safe and happy in their current living situation
- Most respondents have access to a digital device for online learning
- Most respondents feel that they belong at Edinburgh College
- Most respondents feel that Edinburgh College is a welcoming place
- Most respondents feel positive about the college's facilities

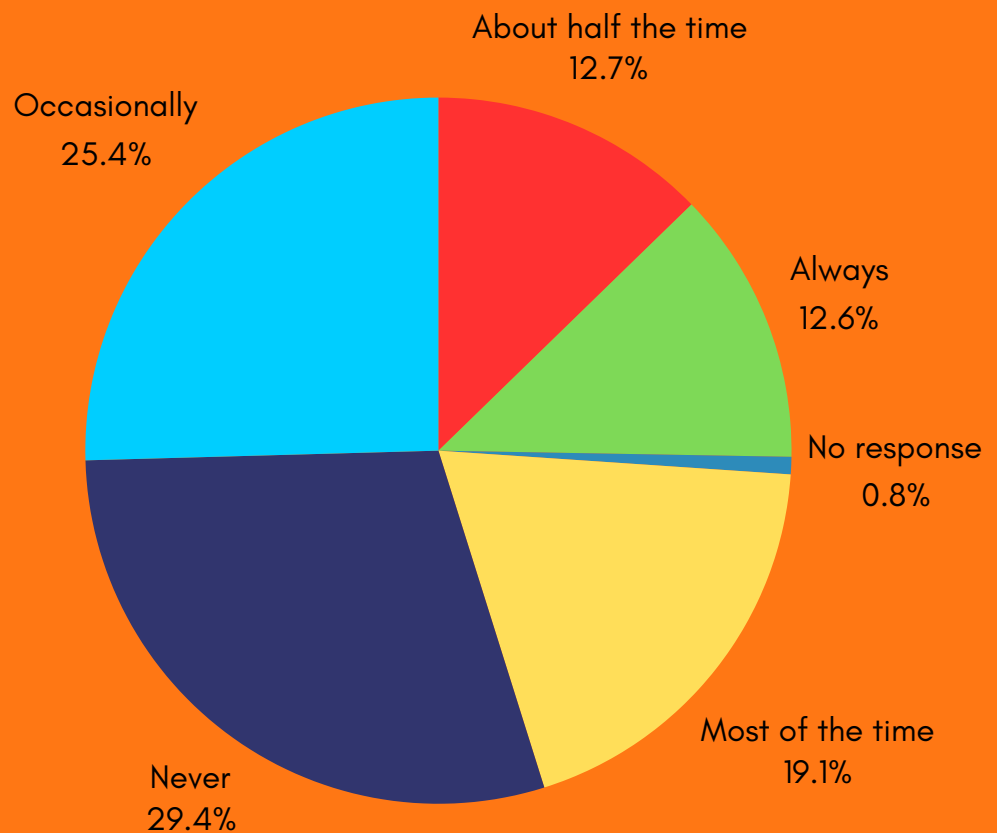
These statistics are very encouraging and there is much to celebrate, given that this survey has taken place during an academic year that has been subject to disruption from strike action.

Despite the overall positive narrative indicated by the above statistics, there are several student quotes that show that Britain's cost of living crisis, including an acute housing shortage, is ongoing. Students continue to juggle their studies alongside difficulties with finances, precarious living situations and long commutes.

"The commute is killing me as I am studying full time, I am in an open learning course, and I am working part time. My studies are in Sighthill, and I live and work in North Berwick, I am getting £151 from bursary for my travels, if I had gone with the student housing, I wouldn't be able to afford it and food."

- Participating Student

We asked students about their financial situation and got a vast range of responses, including to the question **“Do you feel able to save money each month?”** to which over half responded ‘occasionally’ or ‘never’.



The report has informed key discussions with the Board and Senior Management, and will also be drawn upon as a valuable source of evidence when planning for the year ahead. For the first time, we collected our respondents’ demographic data, and we hope gathering this information will assist with projects across the college, to understand how students’ characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, and caring responsibilities, impact on their experiences more broadly.

A key learning from the report is that many of the resources that students want to see more of already exist for Edinburgh College students, for example, through the advice provided by the Guidance and Wellbeing teams, and via online resources such as JobZone and the EC Students’ Association website. We aim to promote these services more widely to students and staff, so that students know what resources they can lean on, to enable them to thrive in College life and beyond.

Wellbeing Fairs

We started the academic year with a big focus on students' mental health, which we felt was even more necessary after the announcement of the strikes, as it was clearly having a negative impact on students. Having held a successful mental health check-in stall in May 2023, we wanted to do something bigger and better this year, to give students as much support as possible.

Our Wellbeing Fairs were an opportunity for students to chat to external organisations from around Edinburgh and see what support and resources are available to them. We held our first Wellbeing Fair at Granton in the Hub in December 2023, and our second was at Sighthill in February 2024. We had a great turnout from our external partners, with 20 charities, groups and organisations getting involved in total. Below is a list of the organisations who set up a stall alongside our own.

- Aditi – support for BAME women in Edinburgh
- AMIS (Abused Men in Scotland)
- Edinburgh Women's Aid
- Get2gether Edinburgh
- Health In Mind
- Hub for Success
- LGBT+ Youth Scotland
- Midlothian Young Carers
- NHS Healthy Respect
- Nightline
- Penumbra Mental Health
- Samaritans
- Social Security Scotland
- SPACE Edinburgh
- Street Assist
- Thrive
- Voice Ability
- Volunteer Edinburgh
- EC Wellbeing Team
- Zine Club from EC Library



The fairs were a huge success and created a comforting atmosphere around the campuses. All day, we had a steady flow of students who came to get involved, collect resources and find out more information about what support they can get. They even made some positivity pom-poms with words of encouragement and positivity for other students to take.



"I just wanted to thank you and your colleagues for hosting such a fantastic event on Tuesday. It was lovely to meet with so many Edinburgh College students and share more about how Health in Mind can support their mental health and wellness."
Kirsty, Health in Mind

Mental Health Check-Ins

While the large-scale Wellbeing Fairs were our main mental health priority for the year, we also wanted to mark both World Mental Health Day (10th October) and Mental Health Awareness Week (13th-19th May). Awareness days are a great way to open the conversation around mental health. We approached the stalls with a focus on self-care, which is easier for people to discuss informally than mental health issues.

At our mental health check-in stalls, we gave out self-care resources and asked students to rate their mental health between 1 – 5 anonymously using the scale below.

	Sighthill Campus October 2023 (134 students)	Milton Road Campus May 2024 (53 students)
1 - I am in a dark place	1.5%	5.6%
2 - I am having a hard time	17.9%	20.7%
3 - I am doing ok / unsure how I feel	22.4%	15.1%
4 - I am doing very well	43.3%	30.2%
5 - I am the best that I can be	14.9%	28.3%

As suggested by our survey research and our conversations through individual casework over the course of the year, there are certainly many students who are facing difficulties mentally and are juggling lots of responsibilities which causes lots of stress. Our main priority for these students is to be a listening ear and to signpost the many different resources and support services available to them in College, and beyond.

Student Mental Health Agreement

To coincide with Mental Health Awareness Week (13th–19th May), we launched our new Student Mental Health Agreement, which was signed by both Association President, Skye Marriner and the Principal, Audrey Cumberland. The Agreement is the result of research with the student body, collaboration between the college and the Students' Association, and working with the National Union of Students' Think Positive Project, which helps to promote best practice in Mental Health & Wellbeing across the tertiary education sector in Scotland.

To make things easily accessible for everyone, we distilled our Agreement down to five key pledges.

1. Promotion & Prevention

We pledge to provide information to all students about the resources available to support with their mental health and wellbeing. By raising awareness through proactive promotion, we hope to increase our chances of intervening early, whenever students feel their mental health is not good.

2. Direct Mental Health Support

We pledge to provide direct mental health support for those in need, including tailored support to priority groups of students, based on their backgrounds, experiences and needs.

3. Spaces & Places

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.

4. Training & Knowledge Exchange

We pledge to create an open, inclusive and supportive community of both staff and students, sharing best practice, knowledge, and resources around Mental Health and Wellbeing.

5. Student & Staff Shared Activities

We pledge to create opportunities for both students and staff to be involved in; fostering an environment of mutual respect and making Edinburgh College a supportive environment for students' mental wellbeing.

To find out more about our Student Mental Health Agreement, head to [our website](#).



Public Health Awareness

As part of Cervical Screening Week, NHS Lothian visited Granton and Sighthill campuses to promote the importance of cervical screening, and raise awareness about the early symptoms of cervical cancer.

As part of our partnership with Chalmers Sexual Health Clinic, we can now distribute condoms to students without them needing to have a C-Card, which has helped more students to access free protection, with no questions asked.

Keeping Students Informed

Alongside our website, which consistently keeps students informed of events, awareness days and opportunities (with 62 news articles written and promoted this year alone), our new comms strategy means that we have been emailing students fortnightly every Friday throughout term time. We now have a rich archive of our previous student newsletters [available to browse](#) with 18 written this year.

However, we know not all students read their emails and many feel overwhelmed by all the written communications they receive, so we've also been trying to mix up how we keep students informed of key issues that might impact them. In November, we held a Live online Q&A with the Principal, Audrey Cumberland, and Vice Principal Education & Skills, Jonny Pearson. Students submitted their questions in advance, on topics which ranged from facilities issues to funding and equality on campus. After the session, [we made the video and transcript available](#) to anyone who was unable to join us.

In response to requests from our Class Reps, we also held an open online information session for students about strikes. This was a safe space for students to ask questions about industrial action and the resulting boycott. After the session, we created a [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) on our website for everyone to access in their own time.

Wellbeing Newsletter

As part of our collaboration with the college's wellbeing team, we've been promoting their events and services to students at every opportunity. This includes sharing their monthly Wellbeing Newsletter, a helpful and informative guide to the resources available to students from College and beyond.

Getting Students Voting

Throughout this year, we've been spreading the word to students that at the next UK General Election, they're going to need photo ID. We've been promoting a joint scheme, set up by NUS and CitizenCard to provide students with officially recognised voter ID for free (usually £18). Making student voices heard at a local and national level is at the core of what we do, so as the next election edges ever closer, we'll be encouraging students to register to vote and make sure they've got the right ID, so that they can make their voices heard at the polling station.



Equalities

Our Equalities Highlights

International Women's Day

Every year on 8th March, EC Students' Association joins with our vibrant student community to celebrate International Women's Day. This year we hosted a stall in the Granton hub, running relaxed crafting activities where students could make paper flowers to gift to inspirational women they know. We played empowering music by female artists and had some great conversations with students about some of the important women in their lives.

We were delighted that Betty Ogbemudia, who is studying Childhood Practice at Granton, performed some poems she had written especially for the day. Her performance was both moving and inspiring and you can read her poem ['Wao!!! Women 2024' here.](#)



LGBT+ History Month

At our LGBT+ History Month stall held at Sighthill campus in February, we had some great conversations about inspiring LGBT+ celebrities and public figures that inspire students. Responses ranged from Kevin Conroy (famous for being the voice of Batman) to Judith Butler (American philosopher and gender studies scholar) and Andrew Muir (Northern Ireland's first openly gay Executive Minister).

We also worked with other students' associations from across Edinburgh to promote a charity LGBT Club night. The event was held at CC Blooms in the City Centre, and students from Edinburgh University, Heriot Watt University, Queen Margaret University, Napier University, and Edinburgh College came together to enjoy a student-only event with all ticket sales going to the LGBT Health & Wellbeing Charity.



Trans Rights

Throughout this year, our Officers have played their part in standing up for trans students at a local and national level. They have attended rallies, protests, and events to always make sure that those who are sometimes the most marginalised in our communities, are treated equally and with respect. The political discourse around the Gender Recognition Act (Scotland) 2024 has led to a lot of trans and non-binary students feeling frightened and unsafe in their communities. We take our role in championing equality and diversity seriously and have continued to stand up for trans rights.

Anti-Bullying Week

For Anti-Bullying Week in November, we hosted a stall at Milton Road campus, speaking to students, handing out freebies and raising awareness of where students can turn if they have experienced bullying. We want everyone to know that bullying is never acceptable, and we will always support students who either witness bullying, or experience it themselves.



Reporting Hate

Since the College's new Hate and Misogyny Reporting System was launched at the start of this year, we have promoted the form multiple times in our student newsletter. We want the college to be a safe space for everyone and appreciate that this system has made it possible for students and staff to report incidents either anonymously or with their details. In some cases, we have worked directly in collaboration with the college to deal with reported issues that have been raised.

Equality Newsletter

We have been working with Nina Munday, the College's EDI lead, to spread the word about the Equality Newsletter, circulating it in our student comms and creating a dedicated hub for it in the support section of our website. The Equality Newsletter brings together the latest equality news and developments at Edinburgh College, such as updates to policies, initiatives and training.

Sustainability

Our Sustainability Highlights

Community Fridge

We have continued to run our four community fridges across the campuses this year, and every week, each is stocked with fresh and ambient food. We have a contract with local charity Cyrenian's, which runs FareShare in the Edinburgh & Lothians. Local supermarkets donate unwanted food to the charity, and we select a certain weight of food to be delivered to each of our campuses. Our contract costs help pay for the delivery and administrative costs, and allows food that would otherwise go to waste, be shared for free to our students. Although we have increased the quantity of food we get each week, it is clear that demand far outstrips supply. We could probably fill the fridges three or four times per week, and it would still get used by students.

Although this is great in terms of sustainability and food waste (which was the original intention of the project), it clearly shows the challenges of the cost of living and paying for basic food throughout the year. The Community Fridges have now been running for almost three years and this academic year has seen us reshare more than **14 metric tonnes of food** (up from 8 tonnes in 2022-23), free of charge to our students, saving the planet and saving our students money at the same time.



Swap Shops

This year we continued to provide our Swap Shops at all campuses, the only change being that we moved Granton's to the first floor outside our office. Due to staffing changes, we no longer track incoming and outgoing donations like we do with our Community Fridges, however, we continue to get many donations and can clearly see that the students use this service. To help us go into the next academic year with a clean slate, we are organising a Swap Shop pop-up on 29th May in the Hub at Granton to promote the service, with the hopes that students will come along and take what they need!



Sustainable Christmas

At Christmas, we put out a [news article](#) to encourage students to be more eco-conscious at a time when it is typically quite difficult to do so. In the article, we gave students tips on reducing food waste, holiday clothes, eco-friendly decorations, gifting sustainably, gift wrapping and greener travelling.

Period Products

By working more closely with the Wellbeing Team this year, we have made more of a conscious effort to offer period products to students at our stalls, to advise them how to order products to their homes, and show where they can pick them up from at each campus. We have given out a mixture of disposable and reusable period products, but we try to take the opportunity to educate students about the reusable products and the benefits they have to them and the planet.



Scalextrics at Milton Road

In February, we supported students from the Routes to Education faculty to take part in a human-powered Scalextric competition as part of Sustainable Education Week. Students rode the stationary bikes to power the model cars, racing to see who could complete the course fastest.



Earth Day

Earth Day takes place on the 22nd of April each year and is a celebration that honours the achievements of the environmental movement, as well as raising awareness of the need to protect Earth's natural resources for future generations. This year, we celebrated Earth Day at Sighthill campus, where we ran a stall to promote sustainability to our students. We asked students to reflect on how sustainably they lived on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being the least sustainable and 4 being the most. Of the 62 students who participated:

2 rated themselves 1 out of 4

23 rated themselves 2 out of 4

29 rated themselves 3 out of 4

8 rated themselves 4 out of 4

We chatted about the different ways we as individuals can live more sustainably, as well as giving out sustainable products such as cotton tote bags, eco sponges, reusable food containers, and a variety of plants for students to grow at home, including chillies, basil, chives, and sunflowers.

We hope that by holding this event, we encouraged both students and staff to take a minute and think about their impact on our planet and consider some small changes they can make to help us move towards a greener future.





Director's Notes

Al Wilson

In last year's report, I talked about how the Students' Association was entering a new chapter celebrating our 10th birthday, rebranding, and rebuilding after several turbulent years. This year can be seen through the lens of helping those seeds grow, with a focus on developing partnerships, improving relationships, and expanding our networks.

Our staff and Officers have engaged with sector groups such as sparqs, NUS, and the Senior Managers' Network. Our newly appointed Board has increased the resource and reach of what we do and we're incredibly excited to be working on our next Strategic Plan. Our events, large and small, have involved both internal partners from across the college, and external organisations from a local and national perspective.

At an operational level, we have worked closely with the Senior Management Team on new and shared projects, and developed our relationships with individual members of the Board of Management with our incredibly successful Reverse Shadowing project. This has allowed us to bring decision makers closer to the reality of the student experience and help inform discussions and decisions at all levels.

Most importantly, we have prioritised building our relationships with students. Whether that be through our growth of Clubs & Societies, our one-off events on campuses, our 500+ strong network of Class Reps, or increasing our outgoing communications, all of this has clearly paid dividends.

We are now regularly having meaningful engagement with over 100 students a day at our pop-up stalls, we've helped foster Clubs that are run entirely by students, we've held a highly contested student election, our Student Life Survey was completed by more than 600 students, and we feed hundreds of students every single week through our Community Fridges.

This year we've delivered some of our biggest events, with the return of Freshers' Fairs, our highest elections turnout since 2017, gaming and crafting events during student holidays, Wellbeing Fairs with more than 20 partner organisations, and a record-breaking 14 metric tonnes of food shared with our students, free of charge.

However, some of our most meaningful engagement is at a much smaller level. We pride ourselves in being the place people go to when they don't know who to ask and those conversations with individual students are invaluable. They give us the chance to help and, most importantly, they genuinely change students' lives knowing that someone has got their back. Although it is much more difficult to quantify this impact, all of our team have worked with individual students on a wide range of issues throughout the year, and this is arguably the most valuable impact we make.



Pro-actively supporting students through visibility at events and activities has also been an intentional approach throughout this year. Whether that is through awareness days, or at events, we want to show that we live our values and we act as we speak. This has been particularly important for queer and trans students throughout this year. The heated, and, sometimes toxic, discourse around trans rights over the past 12 months has left some of our most vulnerable students feeling lost and alone. We are proud of the fact that we have been visibly supporting and standing up for these students to be treated equitably and with respect, on campus and in our communities.

Skye, Luna, and Jon have put themselves at the forefront of standing up for their rights and, as Director, it makes me incredibly proud that these young people can show such passion and leadership to help all students feel safe and part of our College community. We can all learn from their example.



2023-24 has been a whirlwind of a year that has, unfortunately, been characterised by the biggest disruption to students' learning due to industrial action that we have seen in the history of our organisation. So much so, it would be remiss of me to avoid it in my annual reflections.

The impact of strike action from our local lecturer's union during the first six weeks of the academic year has been profound on many students' experiences and has made it challenging to generate essential engagement from day one, causing delays and decreased participation in the first vital months of the academic year. Furthermore, (at the time of writing) the ongoing national disputes with both support and teaching staff unions, leading to many lost days of learning and the non-resulting of coursework, continue to squeeze even the most resilient of students, and have unquestionably prevented some from completing at all.

That is not to say that all students are angry or resentful at those taking this action, even though they are most negatively impacted by it. We have found frustration and anxiety, absolutely, but also a broad understanding of why the national action is being taken by our staff. In almost every piece of research we have undertaken, the vast majority of students have been positive about their teaching and wider student experience.

Throughout this academic year, plagued by industrial unrest, students have shown incredible maturity, understanding, and perseverance. As we look back on the year, a major reflection for me is that we should all show a little bit more understanding and trust with this incredible cohort of students who have, time and time again, shown their passion and drive for their subjects.

This report shows how we have worked hard across the year to pro-actively educate, inform, and gather feedback from students impacted by industrial action. We've developed online feedback forms, held information meetings and Q&A sessions, we've worked with our Class Rep network, and we've moved our monthly all-student newsletter to fortnightly to keep the information flowing and the conversations going for all. Most importantly, through the on-campus work of our Officer team, we have gotten in front of students and listened.



I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank our three Full-time Officers for their incredible work over the last year. They have been relentless and fierce advocates for students, and it has been a genuine privilege to see them develop and achieve over the last year. Our staff team may not be the largest, but Ashley, Genevieve, and Graham have shown what we can achieve when we live by our values and work as a team. Thank you for everything you do.

A thank you too goes to our newly established Board of Trustees, helping to guide us to our next iteration and setting us on course with a new Strategic Plan. We're also grateful to all of our partners from across the college, the sector, and beyond, who have worked with us this year.

Particular thanks to the continued, vital support and genuinely positive working relationship we have with the Development Trust, College Senior Management Team, and Board of Management. We are unique in the sector for how we operate, and our partnership approach and mutual respect for each others' roles and activities is the rock that we build upon. The future is far from certain, but nothing can stop our potential for making a difference to the lives of students if we maintain this solid partnership.

Powered by students. Driven by values. Committed to better.
It's more than just a tag line.



Al Wilson
Director



Photo Gallery

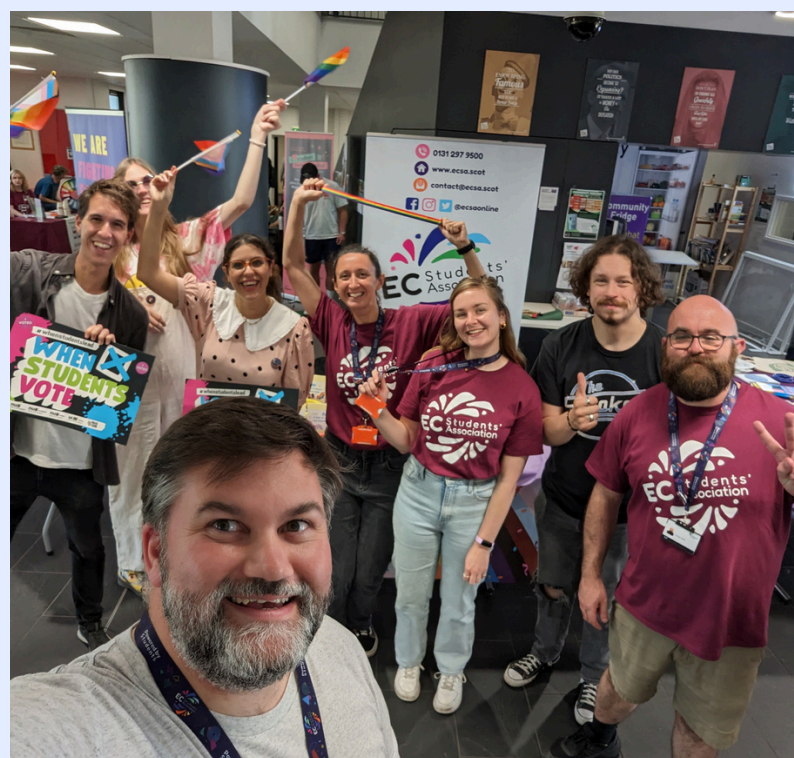
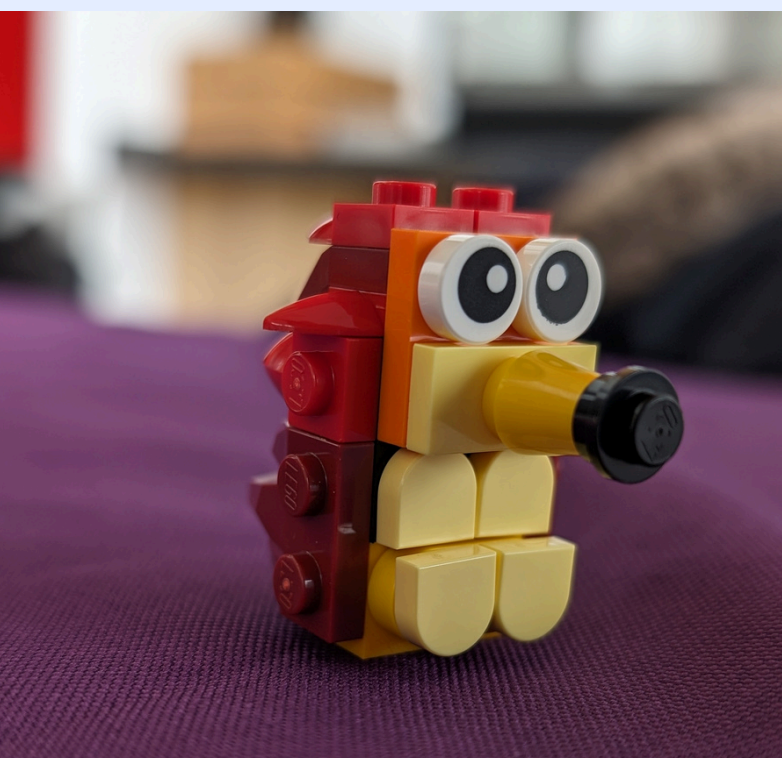




















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