

Paper 29.09.10 – MAC Report (FG)



For Discussion

Purpose

Following the MAC Meeting in June there were continued discussions on the MAC email group. Below is a summary of these for the Board to discuss.

Summary and Feedback from MAC discussion following the MAC Meeting

EAUC Agenda – Focus and Role

General / Clarity:

“I don't feel at present it is completely clear to people on the outside the exact role of the EAUC in practice.”

“Changes in HEA there may be a strategic discussion that needs to take place to understand what the future of network support for the sector (HE and FE) looks like and what role the EAUC could play.”

Specific topics:

“Wondering whether it's unrealistic of me to feel dissatisfied about EAUC's academic, curricular, pedagogic aims”

“I can see the point of their being academic discussion but that needs to be handled as a specialist stream and not dominate the agenda.”

“What will we lose from the current provision if there was more time spent on the EfS side of things. As was mentioned, we only have a set amount of staff time to be able to undertake the EAUC's remit.”

“I do not include ESD or EfS in this and I don't put sustainability research in this”

“The estates part I agree should be much wider than environment and should become sustainability practice.”

Focus of activity for students:

“Student engagement brings in a whole other range of activities and we need to be clear where the boundaries on that are – is EAUC a wider group for Green Impact type work with students or are you trying to cover the whole of sustainability (that is a huge job).”

“So the question is will EAUC continue to expand its remit beyond sustainability professionals in the HE/FE sector and engage across EfS – but this means getting expertise in how arts students think about global challenges, how finance students incorporate actuarial risk modelling in pension fund planning, how law students explore the rights of children within the European Union (list is very long!). Similarly research on facilities and estates (including the wider sustainability aspects of this) makes up only a small fraction of the research in sustainability. Does EAUC want to engage with sustainability academics like this” “I was concerned that the remit was expanding to cover all of the above without thinking about what this means from a resource point of view for EAUC.”





EAUC Agenda – Target Audience

“I ask myself whether one should settle for the practitioner focus, which in my own life would be a very disappointing objective”

“In my opinion the core audience is sustainability practitioners within both HE and FE. The EAUC would be at risk if that emphasis changes substantially to students and academics. They would lose the practitioners and not necessarily gain the others.”

“In my opinion the emphasis should be on increasing FE participation over and above HE students and academics or the EAUC should come clean and admit its primary focus is HE.”

“The fact is, at the moment, the EAUC struggle to cover all the sustainability practitioners. For instance it’s only been this year Fairtrade has appeared in any way.”

“I strongly believe that EAUC should be open to all within FE/HE”

“Focussing on sustainability practitioners would, in my personal view, continue to place us behind closed doors”

“To me, Environmental Managers and sustainability practitioners do seem to need an organisation such as this.” “My worry is that if we start to move to focus to other people, these individuals specifically may see it as 'not for them',”

“I don't think we can be everything to all people, especially when the cost of what we currently provide means some institutions are priced out of fully engaging;”

“I can see a desire by EAUC to expand its remit and to be truly an environmental association for universities and colleges (not just estates managers) – so this does mean students, academics (both research and teaching) as well as other aspects (finance management etc). However this breadth requires a different organisation and support structure so the question is whether it is cost effective for the EAUC to do this or not.”

“Narrow it down very specifically to sustainability managers/practitioners within FE and HE. This is a good focus and should continue”

Conference (in addition to meeting notes)

“In the context of the MAC discussion on the conference attendance, I think this leads us to ensuring that it is economically viable and useful to attend a single day of the conference. From my perspective this would mean keeping streams to a single day and probably changing the format so that there are 2 full days; AND not biasing fees towards full conference attendance. This would allow me to send more people for shorter periods of time and I presume put partial attendance within scope for smaller teams and FE colleagues. I would also like to see many more students attend but this needs to take into consideration the timing of the conference (pre exams), their lack of ability or desire to plan, and cost. There would be significantly more attraction to organisations that are local to the conference venue and I'd like to see students able to 'almost' drop in or turn up on the day, register free and take part. HE/FE organisations could post pay using a voucher scheme with a cap on numbers per organisation, etc.”





Fellow Scheme (in addition to meeting notes)

“As far as the Fellows scheme is concerned, whilst there may well be ‘willingness to share’ we are all businesses and we pay a lot in association fees and a lot for our staff. Budgets are constantly being squeezed and staff need to be more accountable for resource use, I might be willing to share my experience (not expertise) to the sector but not so freely as the Fellows scheme that we discussed suggests. If there were some financial incentive or quid pro quo discount on fees this might be more acceptable. Alternatively, if the research was clearly defined and scoped and offered out to us to bid for, discounts could then be applied to the organisation that won the bid. I’m not sure about the use of students as part of curriculum, since research tends to focus on process and well as outcome, and therefore may not lead to sufficient (economically viable) outcomes.”

“But, in the context of the discussion about fellows and limited resources, this demonstrates a disconnection between the realities of the resource envelope and EAUC objectives. What problem are we trying to solve, how does it relate to specific objectives, is it’s priority higher than some other objective, can resource be reallocated, etc.”

EAUC Structure / Workings

“Whilst the EAUC has a strategic framework, there does not seem to be an associated set of prioritised and realistic SMART targets on which to work and report on. I’m afraid I can see only a very indirect and tenuous link between the strategic framework and the annual report. There seems to be a big gap in the middle.”

“I think the suggestion that we might input to the operational plan is an interesting one. I think, however, that we are not charged with assisting with strategic direction, and that we should trust the Executive to translate that into implementation. The questions asked have been valid and some are borne out of our collective lack of understanding of the EAUC's internal wiring. What is clear is that there should be a golden thread from the strategy into the operational plan and the annual report ought to be consistent in language, format and content to its parent docs. Having said that, the design of this years report was refreshingly accessible!”

