

Cross-Party Group on India

Friday 13 May 2022, 09.00 – 10.30.

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Group members

Pam Gosal MSP
Paul O' Kane MSP
Jenni Minto MSP
Murdo Fraser MSP
Miles Briggs MSP
Sandesh Gulhane MSP

Non-group members

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Youth Employment & Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP
Alexander Stewart MSP
Sharon Dowey MSP
Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP

Invited guests

Asif Saeed, office of the Consulate General of India.
Alastair Sim, Universities Scotland
Mark McCahill, Colleges Scotland
Veronica Lynch, University of the Highlands & Islands
Phil Bale, University of Aberdeen
Vimal Subramanian, University of Aberdeen
Professor Wendy Alexander, University of Dundee
Professor Kim Dale, University of Dundee
Professor Brad MacKay, University of St Andrews
Professor Moyra Boland, University of Glasgow
Dr. Sreevas Sahasranamam, University of Strathclyde
Professor Pankaj Pankaj, University of Edinburgh
Alastair McGhee, Glasgow Kelvin College
Paul Little, City of Glasgow College
Michael Cross, City of Glasgow College
James Thomson, Ayrshire College
Jane Grant, Borders College
Stephanie Graham, West College Scotland

Caroline Hogg, Forth Valley College
Duncan McDougall obo Jon Vincent, Glasgow Clyde College

Secretariat services provided by Yolande Claes, of PG Paper.

Apologies

Jackie Baillie MSP
Sir Paul Grice, Principal, Queen Margaret University
Professor Gerry McCormac, University of Stirling
Professor Andrea Nolan, Edinburgh Napier University

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor, Pam Gosal MSP, welcomed the group and thanked everyone for their attendance. Apologies were noted.

The Convenor noted that the meeting's area of focus would be Education.

The Convenor thanked PG Paper for providing secretariat services.

2. Minister for Higher and Further Education, Youth, Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP

Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for HE and FE Education, Youth, Employment and Training, thanked the Convenor for inviting him to the meeting.

The Minister welcomed the establishment of a CPG on India and stressed its importance in raising Scotland's international profile as a place of work and study and noted India was a key partner in that regard.

The Minister re-affirmed the commitment of the Scottish Government to continue developing and strengthening links with India. The significant numbers of students from India in Scotland as well as a strong academic representation in Scotland were highlighted. It was also noted that Scotland's transnational education was also very well received in India and that 16 Scottish HE/ FE institutions had already established relationships with their counterparts in India, with various collaborations in research, innovation and education.

The Group was reminded that the Scottish Government has launched the Scotland-Asia partnership in 2020 and that support funding for UK – India research participation was available to Scottish Colleges and Universities.

The Convenor thanked the Minister for his input and invited questions to the Minister. The Minister stressed the commitment of the Scottish Government to help facilitate partnerships between HE and FE institutions in Scotland and India, in order to create a stream of talents between the two nations. The Minister also noted the range of research and innovation opportunities (medicine, climate change, etc).

3. Update from the Deputy Convenors Paul O'Kane MSP and Jenni Minto MSP

The Deputy Convenors briefly introduced themselves, both noting their strong links with India and with the local Indian Community in Scotland. Both welcomed the

opportunity to strengthen links with India, also noting that both nations can learn from their cultures to improve and further develop links.

The Convenor thanked the Deputy Convenors.

4. Paul Little, Principal and Chief Executive of City of Glasgow College, on behalf of Colleges Scotland

The Convenor welcomed Paul Little, who stressed the strong historical links between the two nations, highlighted the high number of Indian students in Scotland as well as the large contribution from Indian academics.

It was noted that City of Glasgow College could add a strong value in all three areas of trade, education and culture and had coordinated a lot of activities during the recent COP26, including the Clean Ganga Exhibition. It was observed that City of Glasgow College was working with 15 Indian cities in various areas such as hospitality, marine sector, technology, robotics, cyber-security, etc.

Paul Little welcomed the creation of a CPG on India, which will be a fantastic resource to strengthen collaborations/ partnerships, and thanked CPG for the opportunity to represent the College sector.

The Convenor thanked Mr Little.

5. Alastair Sim, Director of Universities Scotland

The Convenor welcomed Alastair Sim, who stressed the importance of India in the HE sector in Scotland. A presentation was given on the depth of the education relationship between the two nations, highlighting strong, inter-disciplinary research partnerships in various fields of expertise. Mr Sim also highlighted the trans-national education delivered by Scottish institutions in partnership with Indian ones and noted there was room to grow this much further. Mr Sim also spoke about student mobility, noting that there were around 5,700 Indian students in Scotland and 250 postgraduate research students, and academic mobility, noting that there were 470 Indian academics working in Scotland.

Mr Sim stressed that there were various opportunities for further development, including the UK Government International Strategy which identifies India as a priority country for increased engagement, and the Trans-National Education Agreement.

The Convenor thanked Mr Sim.

6. Head of Chancery Mr Asif Saeed, on behalf of the Consulate General of India

The Convenor welcomed Mr Saeed, who stressed Scotland's world-class education, including in the areas of biotechnology and medicine, and noted that many Indian students had acquired great knowledge and skills in Scotland. Mr Saeed referred to the Clean Ganga Exhibition hosted by City of Glasgow College, which highlighted the theme of environment and sustainability and the need for a global effort to mitigate the impact of climate change. Mr Saeed added that the possibilities for collaborations were

endless and that the Consulate would be delighted to help and support the CPG on India.

The Convenor thanked Mr Saeed.

7. Q&A

There followed a Q&A session, during which the following was raised:

- Colleges, and not only universities, carry out too a lot of research and provide world-class expertise in teaching and learning. The CPG on India is important for increased support and visibility.
- As part of the UK-India roadmap, there is an inter-governmental agreement which will help towards recognition of one-year MScs in India.
- It was noted that joint degrees/ programmes present some issues as, structurally, there are differences in how HE/FE institutions are run in both countries.
- A step forward may be one of region-focused approach and state-level links as India is a vast country.
- The need to carefully consider priority areas/ projects was noted.
- A move towards subject ranking rather than university ranking would be welcome.

The Convenor thanked all for attending the meeting. It was noted that many positive activities were being done in the HE/ FE sector and that the CPG on India could help open up and strengthen relationships.

The Group was informed that there would be a meeting of the Group on the theme of culture at the end of June 2022 and a further meeting on the theme of Trade in September 2022, possibly followed by a trip to India in February 2023.