



## **ECSDN Members Meeting via Teams**

22/05/2026

09.30 – 11.20

Minutes

### **Welcome and apologies for absence:**

#### **Attendees:**

Tanya Richardson, Matthew Northall, Karen Boardman, Stacy Randall, Kerrie Lee, Aaron Bradbury, Martin Needham, Jo Josephidou, Verity Campbell-Barr and Angela Scollan.

Selena Hall – Wolverhampton University

Jo Dallal – Formally Kingston University and now Roehampton University

James Hughes - Kingston University

Ceri Morgan – Anglia Ruskin University

Louise Stafford - Oxford Brookes University

Zoe Scott – University of Derby

Laura Mitchell – West Suffolk

Rebecca Walters – Teesside University

Jo McNulty

Paula Daines – Anglia Ruskin University

Diane Harris

#### **Apologies:**

Samantha Hoyes.

Sharon Collies.

Louise Hannon

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

The last time together was the AGM in March, the fortnightly newsletter is sent out so today is for updates and coming together. The purpose to share things which are going well and any concerns with no fixed agenda.

Angela Scollan is now the Deputy Chair this is a new role. There are new groups now in place for the ECSDN. Alumni (Meredith Hare), International Group (Aaron and Martin Needham), Student Voice and Membership (Deborah Nye).

Updates from Tanya and Aaron - the first awards event had great feedback, members sharing it was lovely to celebrate as a network. Members want this so next awards



planned for 29th January 2027. We would like nominations for award categories submitted by members please. Tickets are nominal in price, up to 150 places will be available which is an increase from the 120 at the 2026 event.

**Birth to five matters** – ECSDN is involved with the review, Ofsted and DfE are involved in these meetings. Aaron thanked people who are involved in panels and working groups representing the network. Play and advocacy are key for the updates and should be ready for July 2026, the network will send out the updates. Aaron and Tanya have had positive meetings with DfE and talked about graduates in the workforce and there will be another open conversation about the roles graduates can play in family hubs and more.

Tanya shared the structure of the year is being reviewed, to avoid bottle necks and give the dates to members way ahead to allow strategic planning. The executive away day is planned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> July and plans for the year ahead will be on the agenda. Students and graduates being the key focus of the network. Consultations with members will take place and there is a different remit for business plan alignment. The recognition of the roles and work completed was acknowledged.

### **Strategy Group Updates**

Angela gave an update and shared her sadness to hear another ECS course is ending (Derby). Angela is in the Deputy Chair role now and will work with Tanya and Aaron. At the last meeting there is an awareness that Angela will join each of the strategy groups to look for themes for cross over and interconnection for the ECSDN, which could result in a publication, Angela is open to feedback about the role and the direction this could take from members.

Aaron will be stepping down as Co-Chair and Angela will move into this role, so the Deputy Chair vacancy will open for nominations.

**Policy, Lobbying and Advocacy (Karen)** – Recently appoint as chair but has been a member of the ECSDN for a long time. Karen is working with Matt to raise the profile of what the strategy group does, to show roles, impact of the graduate student. Students understand what policy, lobbying and advocacy is but not sure how they can influence policy. The group want to raise the profile of ECSDN, have worked on the white paper, this will be shared via the newsletter. Case studies are being further developed and the Community of Practice and is being set up by Deb Nye. This means Foundation Degree support is in place. A request for 4 meetings a year has been agreed. Karen will include her work with babies into the ECSDN work.



**Research Knowledge Exchange (Jo)** – This group has had changes to membership and leadership, on reflection this is due to career progress. The expertise is appreciated and acknowledged. Tim Clark has left the group and Eva the Co-Chair has stood down but remains in the groups. **Conference** – highlight of the year and most proud of inclusive nature, being online and free to attend. Wide range of participants with a mixture of experiences. Changes are coming, so the conference will move from January to the Summer (probably June). The next planned conference will be June 2027 date to be confirmed. **Student papers** – these are on the website since 2022 as well as papers uploaded as a journal format, developed with the 2023 volume 1. There will be changes for the way student papers will be uploaded and a call for papers will come out soon. The wider team of reviewers is required and do contact Jo or Eva if you would like to be involved. **Funding for small research projects** – this is paused and will be discussed again in July 2026.

**Sustainability (Kerrie and Angela)** – Have different working groups and everyone gets acknowledged, worked with Matt to get the website updated and resources are now available. The 3 pillars and 17 SDGs are present. Blogs are produced for the website, first round table took place. ECCERA and book chapters also taking place. SDGs being mapped by settings to help with climate action plans in settings. Playful Green Planet space is being used by families and Kerrie is involved in this via her job and won the Social Impact of the Year award. Sustainability Resources | ECSDN

**IT/Website update (Matt)**- - Curious Minds Student Blog is on the website Curious Minds - Student blog | ECSDN and is for 750-word summaries which can be publicly available. Matt has been working with the Co-Chairs on updating the website.

**Professionalism and Workforce (Verity and Sam)** – Main focus is the competencies and thanks for the group & Matt and Sam. Verity shared the document via Teams and not much has changed, the key thing is the alignment to international work and there is the knowledge, practice and values columns. These are live on the website, and it is up to HEIs how to phase in and out the competencies. No one will be required to do a new validation. A summary of evidence guide will be developed in addition to the new booklet Graduate Practitioner Competencies\_26 | ECSDN

A reminder that Helen will come out to do the audit and helps with sharing best practice. A quality mark (virtual badge) is available after the audit. Zoe asked about the frequency of the audits. Zoe shared it was a really positive experience. There is no cost and Helen can share good practice to support settings, an amazing critical friend, with language aligned.

Zoe shared she used pebble pad to upload GPCs previously. Derby now use Teams to upload work. The university will close down their Early Years degree within two years.



Tanya shared the constitution is reviewed and this now means individuals membership is available, to ensure we keep expertise within the network.

**International Group (Aaron and Martin)** – The international group is new and needs members. People that are interested should contact the group, Martin shared ideas about the scope of the group and development and there could be links with the sustainability group round tables. Martin shared his involvement with other groups and how these can lead to collaborate working. Financial pressures are being experienced around the world, so conference attendance is increasingly difficult. Martin has had requests to write a paper about what we do, as people in other countries would like to learn about what we do in this forum. Existing network/affiliation could be considered as part of the group so we can learn from each other.

#### **AOB**

Aaron Bradbury - shared details that numbers are up with the closure of other groups, Early Years being in the news has created interested. Validation is due to take place and a new EE is appointed. Matt and Aaron shared online learning is being reviewed.

Paula Daines – gave an overview, finding the student demographics changing and experiencing more neurodiversity, talking about work with distance learning students to find the best way to study. The blended/accelerated days are showing there is a shift to best serve the students on campus. Our Head of School is campaigning about the GOS data. Research groups taking place, Montessori and NOF Conference and Nursery World presence are helping ARU with recruitment.

Rebecca Walters – sad to hear about Derby, talked about the level of deprivation, the launch of the apprenticeship and seen an increase of interest. Links with local area increasing and helping and making a difference to students. The Early Childhood routes are significantly increasing as a result.

Verity Campell-Barr shared Estonia model is worth reviewing and is being replicated in Plymouth, going forward money will be invested by the Government. Verity is working Team Play-mouth.. strapline to be adopted if Verity gets her way. Making learning affordable and there is an earn as you learn and develop as they go... applications are up. Research is showing we can end up with cold spots and 50kms, so important to build the Early Childhood workforce: A Systematic review of early years degrees and employment pathways



Tanya shared a dual partnership with China is now happening, the modules are the same and the students will get certificates from both universities. An international college has been set up in China.

Aaron shared an air of caution about apprenticeships, and the standard is as a teacher and not an early year's graduate. Aaron is going to run the standards and watching to see what happens. Aaron asked if Rebecca Walters could do an overview of apprenticeships for members.

Zoe shared Derby news and shared they still delivering a degree in Greece and there has been a successful visit. The online TopUp continues to take place. Derby is going down the teacher training route.

If you want to get involved with any strategy group then please email Jo Steele on [josteele@ecsdn.org](mailto:josteele@ecsdn.org) to express your interest.

**Next Meeting** - TBC all dates to be agreed at the July executive away day and then shared.