Old College Access to Spaces & Artworks Engagement Report

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1. Introduction & Purpose

Deciding Matters was asked by the Heritage Collections team from the University of Edinburgh to facilitate a series of workshops as part of an engagement programme on Old College artworks, spaces and use. These discussions led to a set of guiding principles and recommendations for actions that the participants would like to be considered in the development of proposals for changes to the Old College spaces.

About the Old College Heritage and Values Project

By far the largest and most prominent displays of the University's art collection on campus are at Old College, where approximately 100 portraits of figures connected to the University in the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries are on display. The Old College Heritage and Values Project is a multi-year programme of work dedicated to reviewing these displays in line with the inclusive values outlined in Strategy 2030. These include:

- Our teaching and research is relevant to society and we are diverse, inclusive and accessible to all.
- We foster a welcoming community, where staff, students, alumni and friends feel proud to be part of our University.

We sustain a deep allegiance and commitment to the interests of the city and region in which we are based, alongside our national and international efforts, ensuring relevance to all.

Built at the turn of the 19th century, Old College was the University's main campus in its time, housing everything from the library to natural history and anatomy museums. The building is often seen as a symbol of the Scottish Enlightenment due to its neoclassical architecture and the prominence of University professors associated with this period, many of whom are commemorated in its portrait displays.

The project is critically examining the artworks on display in ways that acknowledge both the lack of diversity represented in the portraiture, and the histories and contributions that are not visible in the celebrated heritage of this University building. A key part of the process involves working with staff and student groups to engage with the artworks and the histories of the site through teaching, research, creative responses, and consultation.

It will also consider the actions and ongoing commitments from the University's Race Review published in July 2025: Review of Race and History | The University of Edinburgh

Scope of the Old College Project

The scope of the Old College Project is to propose changes to the artwork displays and expanded access routes to the spaces. Key considerations include the multiple uses of the space and attendant security needs. These spaces are in currently use as staff offices, meetings, events and exam spaces and are also home to University collections of paintings and busts. While full open access to the spaces is not within the scope of this project, proposals for new access routes are. All

proposed changes would need to be fully costed and considered within the wider context of the current financial landscape.

2. Executive Summary

Deciding Matters delivered a series of workshops in collaboration with the Heritage, Collections and Research Team to develop a set of Recommendations and Guiding Principles that can be taken forward in the Old College for change. Outputs were collated from workshops and a survey that have informed these Guiding Principles and Recommendations. Across all findings, a central tension emerges between Old College as a symbol of elite institutional power and its potential to become a democratic, inclusive, and critically engaged space. Changes to the artworks and the uses of the Old College spaces need to account for a shift from exclusivity and symbolism to creating an authentic space of belonging, co-creation, and active engagement.

2.1 Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles below reflect not just redesigning a building and its artworks but are about redefining relationships including between students and leadership, between past and present and between the university and the public. These Guiding Principles can be considered alongside the Recommendations below in the development of the Old College Project proposals for change.

1. Access (physical and cultural)

Old College should function as a shared, everyday university and civic space, where students, staff, and the public feel legitimate ownership, without needing justification to enter. Access should expand toward a fundamental cultural shift in who the space is for and how it can be used – to make for a more dynamic, open, and evolving space. Security should reflect this, developing a model of managed openness, where safety measures do not undermine accessibility, trust, or inclusion.

Students have described needing permission to enter, making access feel like a privilege:

"I feel special for having been allowed to come in here, but it is wrong I feel this way."

"Gatekept so strongly" and "not a natural gathering place."

"Security… not on the behalf of students."

2. Representation, visibility and belonging

Old College should visibly reflect the diversity of the university community, ensuring that students and historically marginalised groups are represented not as an addition, but as central to the narrative. The current visual environment reinforces exclusion through overwhelming

representation of elite, white, male figures. This lack of representation contributes to alienation and disconnection from institutional identity.

"It's just old white men on walls everywhere."

"I'm not represented on the walls."

3. Critical engagement with history (not erasure or celebration)

Adopt a critical, dialogical approach to heritage, where artworks and artefacts are accompanied by transparent interpretation, acknowledging institutional complicity in colonialism and other forms of oppression. There is strong consensus that problematic histories should be contextualised, interrogated, and made visible, rather than removed or passively displayed. Participants questioned celebratory narratives and raised concerns about any superficial changes:

"Why are they celebrated? They led on racial sciences and were slave owners?"

"Modern art… feels like box-ticking…"

4. Authentic institutional change over symbolic gestures

Physical and visual changes to Old College must be aligned with genuine institutional reform, avoiding tokenistic interventions that undermine trust. Students are highly attuned to the gap between institutional messaging and reality. Perceived contradictions include:

"The university is projecting an image… but it is disingenuous."

"Students are doing all these progressive initiatives and… this space is the harsh reminder of what is at the core."

5. Student and staff voices, trust and shared governance

Embed student and staff co-creation and shared decision-making into governance of the space, ensuring ongoing input into programming, access, and representation. A major barrier identified is lack of trust between students and senior leadership, alongside limited opportunities for meaningful participation.

"Student voice is being silenced at the moment."

"The first time… students see senior leadership is at graduation."

6. Social and civic responsibility

Position Old College as a civic hub, strengthening relationships between the university and the people of Edinburgh. Participants emphasised that the university should not be inward facing, and exclusionary but embedded within its wider community.

"Academia is exclusive... Edinburgh Uni is such an elitist university."

"I can really see this as a living historic museum."

7. Transparency and accountability

Ensure transparent communication and accountability in how decisions about space, funding, and representation are made. There is a lack of clarity around decision-making, funding, and institutional priorities.

"There is a lack of financial transparency."

"Students are unclear about who is the senior leadership team and how decisions are made."

2.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect common feedback from participants in the workshops. These can be considered alongside the guiding principles in the development of the Old College Project proposals for change. They are arranged to reflect the structure of the proposals shared at the workshops, as follows:

A. Artworks, interpretation, and site histories
B. Access to the spaces and usage
C. Trust and decision-making
D. Recommendations for wider change

It is understood that not all the following recommendations may be possible based on feasibility, budget, and time. It is also important to note, there was no consensus on what to do with the artworks or which artworks to include, as it is such a vast topic, however the following ideas came out as popular approaches for change and are designed to be considered alongside the curator and heritage team proposals.

The findings demonstrate that Old College is not simply a physical space, but a symbolic centre of institutional identity, power, and history. Currently, it is experienced as exclusive, unrepresentative, and disconnected from the student body. However, there is a clear opportunity to transform it into a dynamic, inclusive, and critically engaged space. A phased approach, beginning with access and

visibility, followed by structural change, and finally in institutional transformation, offer a realistic and impactful pathway forward. The success of this transformation depends on a shift to moving from institutional control to shared ownership with students, staff, and the wider community.

A. Artworks, interpretation, and site histories

This section covers the following areas: changes to current artwork displays, commissions of new artworks (portraits and other forms), information about the artworks and the histories of Old College and lesser-known histories not currently visible in the spaces.

Recommendations
1. Add context to the artworks. This could be done through: • Temporary labels. • Printed guides at reception. • QR codes linking to deeper histories. • Content should include colonial links, racial science histories and missing voices. This will help to address the lack of information and demand for context rather than removal of histories. *"Portraits…don't tell us anything"*
2. Major re-curation of art and space utilising Claire's proposals and audit of portraits and artefacts. This could be done through: • Contextualise all works. • Rotate/remove some pieces. • Commission diverse artists. • Include provocative approaches such as repositioning artworks or experimental installations. This will help to address the need for dialogue on the paintings and the need to de-colonialise the space. *"De-colonialise the space".* *"There needs to be dialogue about paintings".* *"Why are they celebrated?"*
3. Launch a rotating exhibition programme this could include themes and topics on: • Colonial history and reparations. • Student activism. • "Hidden figures". • Use historic objects. • Use student/community art. This will help to address the request for dynamic, changing narratives and education. *"Mix the old portraits with student/community art".*

B. Access to the spaces and usage

This section covers the following areas: new access routes to the Old College spaces and uses of the space for different types of activity.

Recommendations
4. Introduce regular guided tours (staff and student led) • Launch weekly or monthly themed tours (history, film, protest, art, architecture). • Train student tour guides as part of paid or credited roles. • Include *"hidden histories"* and contested narratives. • Tours seen as a practical entry point to reduce exclusivity. *"Experimental learning to get students to deliver tours…"*
5. Establish open access days/time slots • Designate specific days (e.g. Fridays, Saturdays) for public and student access. • Pilot "doors open" style events each semester. This will help to address controlled access barriers. *"It's not a natural gathering place".*
6. Activate the space with light-touch programming. This could be done through: • Small exhibitions (student work, research outputs). • Film screenings or talks. • Use underutilised areas (corridors, alcoves, Raeburn Room edges). This will help to address the need for visible activity to change perceptions. *"It's such a waste of space".*
7. Support student-led programming. This could be done through funding and approving: • Student exhibitions. • Political expression (within guidelines). • Memorials and installation. This will help to address the request for shared ownership and build trust. *"Student voice is being silenced".*
8. Strengthen community engagement. This could be done through introducing: • School partnerships. • Public workshops. • Markets or seasonal events. • Collaboration with local organisations (e.g. homelessness initiatives). This will help to address the concerns with exclusivity and the desire for community integration. *"Spaces that also serve Edinburgh's wider community".*

C. Trust and decision-making

This section covers the following areas: communicating with participants of the consultation and wider university community and the possible ways of involving the wider community in decision-making and programming going forward to improve trust.

Recommendations

9. Create anonymous student feedback mechanisms. This could be done through:
• Ongoing digital platform or workshops.
• Allow input on:
  ○ space use
  ○ exhibitions
  ○ access
 	
This will help to address the fear of repercussions if students speak out.
 	
"Student voice is being silenced".

10. Establish a student-staff steering group to co-govern: • Exhibitions. • Access policies. • Programming. • Include diverse student representation. This will help address uncertainty and build transparency about decisions and how decisions are made.
11. Improve transparency. This could be done through publishing: • Funding allocation for Old College. • Decision-making processes. • Communicate changes clearly (e.g. when artworks are removed). This will help to address the distrust in institutional motives. *"Lack of financial transparency".*

D. Recommendations for wider change

This section includes suggestions that are out with the scope of the Old College Project, but which reflect desires for wider university changes.

Recommendations
12. Expand use as a functional student space. This could be done through: • Introducing study areas (especially exam periods).

• Introducing bookable rooms for societies and PhDs. • Pilot partial reopening of library or similar spaces. This will help to address the request for practical use of the space, not just symbolic change. *"No reason to come".*
13. Reframe Old College as a "Living Museum/ Civic Space" through: • Moving away from administrative elite building to a public, educational and community space. *"I can really see this as a living historic museum."*
14. Embed decolonisation and reparative practices through linking to the Race Review findings. This could be done through: • Repatriation efforts. • Funding redistribution where appropriate. • Long-term partnerships with affected communities. *"Money should go back to colonialised countries."*
15. Reassess spatial power structures through considering: • Relocating leadership functions. • Increasing permanent access. This will help to address the space being perceived as exclusive and leadership dominated.
16. Drive long-term cultural change through shifting towards: • Openness. • Trust in students. • Acceptance of political expression. This will help to address concerns about suppression of protest and surveillance.

2.2 Transparent Decision Making

Deciding Matters understands that the actions and recommendations from this report will be considered alongside proposals developed by the Old College Project team. Any proposed actions require board approval and sign-off by senior leadership team to be taken forward.

Outputs from the workshops and survey in the form of this report will be shared with the Old College Heritage and Values Project board and the Project Curator. Any recommendations will be considered as part of wider University discussions which will inform the development of proposals over the coming years. This report will be shared with participants by Deciding Matters for review and comment before being published.

It is our recommendation that, regardless of the outcome, the University of Edinburgh publish their decision-making process publicly, sharing their consideration of each recommendation and how

they came to their conclusion. This will support trust in the engagement process as well as in the organisations involved.

3. Approach and Methodology

3.1 Process Delivery

3.1.1 Inception and Planning

DM worked closely with the Heritage Collections Team and the Old College board to identify key lines of enquiry, a series of questions which would be brought to participants through workshops and a survey. These questions intended to understand the range of perceptions and highlight what is important for change.

The following workshop questions were identified as being relevant:

Initial thoughts:

- How does the Old College space make you feel?
- Does the Old College space feel welcoming? If not, why not?
- How do you think the Old College space could be used or improved?
- Do you know about the history of the building, its artefacts, and paintings?

Considering the Heritage Collections Curator's proposals and/or walk-around/information of the building:

- What does a welcoming space look like and feel like?
- How could the Old College space be made more inclusive and accessible?
- What does inclusive and accessible mean for this space?
- How could the Old College Space be used? E.g., existing ideas include tours, more public access days, days blocked off for students etc.
- Does the idea already exist i.e., elsewhere. (other universities, spaces, has been done before?). Does the idea have any challenges e.g., financial, security issues?
- Who gets to decide access/use of space and any potential new artworks?
- How can we create an inclusive governance system to ensure changes in the space/artworks/use of space is fair, inclusive, ethical and makes sense? E.g. through a university voluntary panel, a university vote or other?
- What would you do with the painting/artefacts?
- What stands out as a strong proposal for change? What are the challenges and opportunities for this proposal?
- Anything missing ideas you would like to add as a group?

3.1.2 Recruitment

Deciding Matters created an information pack and sign-up form to collect demographic data. Communications including invitations and recruitment of participants was undertaken by the Heritage Collections and the Communications and Marketing teams at the University of Edinburgh.

3.1.3 Accessibility and Inclusivity

The delivery team were keen that the process be as accessible and inclusive as possible, considering the wide-ranging needs of participants, and removing as many barriers to engagement as possible.

While completing the expression of interest form, participants were asked to highlight any support they would like to be put in place to ensure they could engage fully in the process. This support could include printed materials, accessibility considerations, language support, etc. Budget was made available to ensure any support needs could be met.

3.1.4 Initial student voices workshop

We delivered an initial student voices workshop with 6 students in attendance in the Raeburn Room on 13th August 2025 to capture from students what is priority to feedback to the board. This helped shape the scope for future workshops on what is and is not feasible and realistic for change.

The aims of this workshop were to:

- Have walked around the space to see how it makes them feel and gain insight into the rooms, paintings and basic history of the building and its uses.
- Expectation setting and recognition of University of Edinburgh's current restrictions and challenges with regards to access and the use of the building and its spaces (e.g., listed building, no space to move paintings to, security staffing costs).
- Identify a student voices vision for the Old College spaces that include consideration for the space, access, inclusion, good investment, history, and objects including paintings and statues.
- Identify the challenges the University of Edinburgh might face e.g., can't address everything in the space, budget restrictions, historical ties, buy-in/back-lash.
- Produce a set of prioritised ideas on functions for the Old College they wish to see the University of Edinburgh's board and further workshop participants review to take forward for change.

The outputs from this workshop are reflected in the recommendations and outputs in this report.

3.1.5 Board priority setting and governance workshop

We ran a short workshop with the board on 4th November 2025 after the initial student voices workshop to identify the scope of decision-making ability for future workshops.

The aims of this session were for the board to:

- Review the initial student voices vision for the Old College spaces that include consideration for the space, access, inclusion, good investment, history, and objects including paintings and statues.

- Identify the scope of decision-making e.g., can't address everything in the space, budget restrictions, historical ties, buy-in/back-lash. Expectation setting and recognition of University of Edinburgh's current restrictions and challenges with regards to access and the use of the building and its spaces (e.g., listed building, no space to move paintings to, security staffing costs).
- Produce a clear set of criteria and scope for the future engagement workshops e.g. decisions can be made on X but cannot be made on Y.

3.1.6 Staff workshops and university voices workshops

We delivered two staff workshops held on 27th and 28th January 2026 aimed at staff working in the Old College building and staff managing access to other Uni spaces (e.g., St. Cecelia's Hall, the Anatomy Museum and the Community Access to Rooms Scheme) and two 'University Voices' workshops, open to staff, students, and alumni networks, groups and campaigns that support equity, diversity and inclusivity at the University, held on 18th February 2026 and 16th March 2026. All the workshops were held within the Old College, in the Raeburn room which helped participants to visibly see the spaces we were discussing and how these spaces made them feel.

During the workshops, the lead facilitator shared an agenda for the workshop, alongside an overview of the project. Participants were asked to share initial feelings of the space and the artworks before listening to a presentation from the UoE Heritage team on potential proposals for change. The groups then got into more detailed discussions with regards to access and use of the Old College and the artworks.

3.1.7 Anonymous survey

An additional survey was shared out via posters and QR codes to capture insights and reflections from those walking through the building in an anonymous way.

4. Workshop outputs

All workshop outputs have been clustered into themes and summarised below. These responses are the opinions and perspectives of the individuals who participated and have been themed to anonymise participants staff and students. These outputs incorporate the initial student workshop, the two staff workshops and the two wider university voices workshops delivered as well as some of the survey responses.

Below we have themed outputs:

- Initial feelings of the Old College space, artworks, and access
- Artworks, interpretations, and site histories
- Access to the spaces and usage
- Trust and decision-making

4.1 Initial feelings of the Old College space, artworks, and access

Across workshops and discussions, the Old College space is consistently experienced as intimidating, exclusionary, and deeply symbolic of institutional hierarchy and power. While some participants acknowledged the building's grandeur and historical significance, this was often overshadowed by feelings of alienation, discomfort, and lack of belonging. The emotional response to the space is complex: it evokes both awe and pride, but also fear, intimidation, and performativity, where individuals feel they must justify their presence or behave in a certain way to "fit" the environment.

Theme	Summary of responses
General feelings of the Old College space	• Participants feel it is oppressive, intimidating, and emblematic of institutional hierarchy. Participants had a mix of feelings of anger, intimidation, and alienation with the Old College Space. • Although when you come into the space you are passive looking around, the space, pictures and architecture still influence your thinking. • The space is widely perceived as formal, hierarchical, and intimidating, with a strong sense of exclusivity. • Many first encounters were through formal events, tours, or official processes rather than casual visits. • There's a prevailing feeling that it is "not for students", especially outside law, with law students themselves being protective of the library. *"I feel special for having been allowed to come in here, but it is wrong I feel this way – everyone should have access."*
Power dynamics & intimidating space	There is a sense that the space reflects historic and ongoing inequalities, particularly around race and representation. *"Intimidating, alienating space."* *"It's oppressive… a harsh reminder of what is at the core of the institution."* *"It feels like you versus the state here."* *"A micro-cosm of elitism."* *"I don't feel welcome. I feel like I'm not supposed to be here."* *"Two conflicting feelings – pride when I get in, but also fear and intimidation."*

	"Architecture… you are stopped at the front desk. It feels like an immigration process." *"When you go into the quad it feels empty… a place of power devoid of humanity."* *"Students are doing progressive things, but this space shows what the institution really is."*
Symbolism, architecture, and atmosphere	• Architecture and design (e.g., the staircase, faux-Georgian style) are seen as symbolic of institutional hierarchy. Traditional portraits of historical figures, symbolic staircases, arches, and towering imagery reinforce exclusion and authority. • The decor (e.g., portraits of old white men in the Raeburn Room) reinforces a sense of tradition and exclusion. • There is a contrast with other spaces known to the students. For example, it feels starkly different from the progressive atmosphere of Edinburgh Art College. • Some view the space as disingenuous in its presentation—modern art and "progressive" initiatives feel like box-ticking. • Participants repeatedly referenced how physical design elements reinforce power structures: • Grand staircases, arches, and portrait-lined walls create a sense of surveillance and hierarchy. • The building feels like a *"seat of power"* rather than a place of learning or community. *"The university is projecting an image by putting these [modern art] paintings up but it is disingenuous."* *"Architecture on the outside of the building for example arches it has an immigration perspective. At the front desk you are stopped."* *"It's just old white men on walls everywhere."* *"Edinburgh Art College is a progressive space whereas here it is very different. It feels like you versus the state here."*
University culture and lack of community	• The Old College space is seen by student participants as a symbolic core of the institution and decision-making but is hugely disconnected from student life and lacks a sense of community. • Participants may remember it more for exam use than as a community hub/usable space.

	• Raises broader doubts about how progressive the university really is. *"There is a disparity with what the Old College are showing versus what students are doing. It's oppressive."* *"Students are doing all these progressive initiatives and then at the core this space is the harsh reminder of what is at the core of the institution."* *"I remember being told off for going on the grass. There is no sense of community."*

4.2 Artworks, interpretations, and site histories

Artworks, especially portraits, are a major source of tension. They are seen as reinforcing narrow, exclusionary narratives, with little explanation or critical engagement. Many participants questioned why certain individuals are commemorated at all, particularly where links to colonialism or racial science exist. However, there is strong consensus that the solution is not simply removal, but rather contextualisation, diversification, and reinterpretation.

Theme	Summary of responses
Current portraits are seen as unrepresentative	• Unrepresentative (overrepresentation and dominated by elite, white, male figures). • Unexplained ("they don't tell us anything"). • Celebratory without critique. • Artwork and artefacts are a major source of criticism. • Participants raised concerns about colonial histories. • Lack of diversity. *"I'm not represented on the walls."* *"No women represented."* *"It's just old white men on walls everywhere."* *"They led on racial sciences and were slave owners?"* *"The University is seen as whitewashing history."* *"I daily walk past the gallery and busts of old white men and do not feel represented. It may be historical, but it is oppressive and uninviting."* (survey response) *"Having used rooms in OC (south side) for multiple university and public-facing events over the past decades, I find the current art collection highly exclusive (historic portraits and busts). To have 100% white male*

	representation of busts in Playfair, and I think all but 1 portrait in the Raeburn, Elder, Lee and Carstares Rooms male (and 100% white), makes me feel highly uncomfortable as a female academic, and embarrassed during public events." (survey response)
Contextualise unexplained artworks	• Participants shared frustration that the paintings do not have any contextualisation, are unexplained and that this could demonstrate selective or hidden narratives and that individuals are being celebrated without critique. • There was a strong sense across discussions that art should challenge, educate, and invite dialogue, not passively commemorate. • Participants advocate for contextualisation rather than removal. Suggestions include adding labels explaining colonial links, QR codes and digital interpretation, rotating exhibitions and mixing historic and contemporary works. *"What's the story behind the portraits?"* *"People part of the story but not shown."* *"They don't tell us anything?"* *"There needs to be dialogue about paintings – why are they celebrated?"* *"More challenging interpretation of the people in the images. Contrast between environment and interpretation".* *"I think there should be more information online and more footage online of current artworks and building use by school groups etc."* (survey response) *"The space has been decorated nicely and I love the round seating area. I personally love the artwork, although I understand it might be a bit contemporary for everyone's taste. Some interpretive signage would be nice to explain how the pieces connect to the university. Also, in the room upstairs (the former Principal's Office, I believe) there is a large canvas depicting an island scene. I always wonder about that piece - I really like it and I think it suits the space well. It would be nice to know more about the artist - are they alumni or faculty? Just knowing more about how it all connects back to the university would be nice."* (survey response)
Desire to reveal histories and 'unsung' contributors	• Participants highlighted that other contributors to the university's history are absent and agreed with the Heritage Collections Curator's presentation on including more hidden

	people. There is a recognition that history is being curated in a selective way. • Participants proposed uncovering gaps on who is not being represented and creating dialogue on this. • To open histories participants suggested the following: • Adding interpretive labels and contextual information • Using QR codes and digital media to expand narratives. • Creating thematic or rotating exhibitions. • Including student and community-curated content. • Juxtaposing historic portraits with contemporary or counter-narratives. *"People part of the story but not shown."* *"Uncover the gaps in history. What's not been represented?"* *"Openly celebrate history but selective history ignoring the history."* *Example: "Darwin learned taxidermist from John Edmonstone."* *"Interpretive display of others within the same time frame currently depicted."* *"Adding the stories of the individuals, combine archival materials".* *"The overall impression of the artwork is that it mainly represents older white men. While these men are part of the University's history, they were able to be so due to their societal, economic, and political advantages and privileges (sex, ethnicity, social class etc). Therefore, I think equal weight should be given to others who although they may be a smaller part of the University's history, contributed despite their lack of advantages and privileges. I appreciate this may take more research as women and minorities tend to be written out of history, but a Russell Group research intensive university should be able to do it. Also, there is a portrait at the top of the main stairs (next to the further stairs to the next floor) with a plaque underneath which mentions the East India Company. My very minimal knowledge of the EIC is that they were involved in some atrocities in India. This sounds like the sort of thing the project will be looking into and I would be interested in more context for this portrait."* (survey response)
Re-hanging or re-positioning of historical paintings to de-colonialise the space	• Historical portrait paintings could be hung upside down [connecting to colonialism, racial science, and slave trades]. This can promote discussions on why they have been hung upside down. There should be rotating exhibitions, information, and engagement which de-colonialize the space. • Historical portrait paintings could be re-positioned lower, so they do not look down on visitors.

	• New artworks should reflect real institutional change and not be disingenuous or tokenistic. *"Hang the portraits upside down… to provoke discussion."* *"Position the portraits lower so that they no longer ""look down"" on students and visitors, alongside descriptions of who they were, and their impacts both positive and negative on the university, the city, and the world at large. The heritage of the university is important to see and acknowledge in all its complexity. Rotate portraits regularly and include more recent figures and artworks."* (survey response)
Modern art display	• There are mixed views on the modern art displays which some participants see as tokenistic and disingenuous and others have said has greatly improved the space. • Efforts to modernise the space are widely viewed as superficial. • Without structural change, visual updates are seen as tokenistic and ineffective. Participants emphasised that representation must reflect real change. *"The university is projecting an image… but it is disingenuous."* *"Modern art… feels like box-ticking."* *"If it is going to house… artwork it should reflect actual institutional change."* *"The new display has transformed the space for the better, both aesthetically and in terms of how it makes me feel as I enter the building and use the stairs daily. I like the contrast between the two sets of displays - it is good to have these viewable separately, and also together, gives pause for thought and reflection and makes one look at the historical artworks with fresh eyes."* (survey response) *"I love the new display! It looks fabulous- love the contrast between the old and the new, the way that the new art works are able to provoke discussion in dialogue with the portraits that are already there. Makes the space come alive."* (survey response)
New art commissions and interpretations	• Participants highlighted multiple ideas and options for new art commissions and interpretations of art: • Artist in residence with access to expertise of academics and people with lived experience. • Need for a good curator to manage and has a clear vision. • Old collections need new interpretations and full context. • New works should reflect current ideas of the university.

	• New works could be rotated. • New works could reflect each era of history or telling different stories e.g. student life, hidden figures. • There is recognition of tension between removing portraits and changing the space. For example, if focused on the past and more recent times *"are we missing more recent middle history".* • New works could be Art College student work which is reflective and looking forward. *"Who decides the narration? Involving community helps".* *"The fundamental issue (far more than the age of the paintings or the gender of the artists) is that portraits depict a very non-diverse group of subjects. Portraits of others who have contributed significantly to University life will make more of a difference than including abstract art by diverse artists."* (survey response) *"Old College is the historic heart of the University of Edinburgh and all visitors (staff, students, public, University visitors) should feel that they are entering the heart of a historic world class university, which is proud of its history and its contributions both historic and current to the globe. Major academics and leaders from the University's past and present should be represented, and I think this is what most people visiting Old College would want to see."* (survey response)

4.3 Access to the spaces and usage

Theme	Summary of responses
Restricted access and under-use	• Old College is not seen as a functional or accessible student space. Access is tightly controlled, and many students have never entered casually. Few students have entered the Old College space without a specific reason, for example, it's not a natural gathering place. • It is primarily used for formal events, funders, dinners, and leadership functions. • Participants highlighted the lack of everyday use. • The space is currently used for hosting funders and dinner parties. • Suggestions included creating student-focused spaces (like Edinburgh College of Art) to foster engagement and representation.

	• Law library is guarded by law students. • There's a feeling that students need permission to enter the Old College space. They feel being allowed in feels "special" but that this is wrong to feel that way as everyone should have access. *"Without [Heritage Collections and Research] project we wouldn't have been able to come here."* *"You have to justify to the reception why you are coming into the building."* *"Few students have entered… without a specific reason."* *"There is no café or study space… no reason to come."* *"It's not a natural gathering place."*
Transforming access to the space	• Participants propose transforming Old College into a shared, inclusive, multi-use environment. Suggested uses could be: • Study spaces (especially during exams). • Student societies and PhD offices. • Community events and markets. • Cultural programming and screenings. • Place of education (history, hidden histories, art, architecture, site of film etc) • Transform the Old College space into a community hub with inclusive, student-focused spaces to foster engagement, shared-ownership, and build trust. • This could be students and volunteers running events, screenings, putting up engagement posters in corridors and engaging with students on decision-making e.g. the artworks and spaces. • The local community and NGPO's should be welcome to use the space, e.g. market stalls or community initiatives could be run here too. *"Make it a place that people can come… it's such a waste of space."* *"How can it be used in teaching responding to the past".* *"First point of contact so should reflect now. What is it saying about the university?"*
Security, senior leadership & opening access	• Participants have recognised that security is needed due to the nature of the use of the building and means access is restricted. • Some participants suggested tin order to fully open access to Old College, the senior leadership team could move their offices to a more modern building.

	"Issue with it being an executive/senior space and not an open, useful space". *"Democratising spaces is actual inclusion. Getting lost in looking good not actually managing it."* *"shouldn't be about power, should be about expertise (student reps, academics and architects"* *"Opening access. Remove senior leadership from building and "level" by putting them in offices like the rest of staff".* *"I understand the need for security, but the front reception desk makes it feel that the space is not inclusive of all. The reception employees are always friendly and helpful, but just the fact that you have to give your name and be buzzed into the building makes it feel exclusive and not open to all."* (survey response) *"Old College is a working space for various high-profile sections which are highly confidential so don't think it's feasible for it to be opened up to create more access to the public/staff/students especially when USG/Registry/Estates are working on minimal staffing levels. This would cause security chaos."* (survey response) *"It would be great to say 'just open it more to the public and students' but there are security and safety concerns in doing that. It is primarily a place of work for those on the south and south-east side of the building, and any changes to who else accesses the building has to be very carefully thought out and controlled. That said, it would be great to be able to offer specific times during the year when it was more open to the public, for guided tours of the Playfair and ground floor meeting rooms."* (survey response)
Community engagement	• Participants proposed opportunities for increased community engagement and use of the space including: • Partnerships with schools • Support for homelessness initiatives • Public access spaces • The vision is for Old College to become a living, active community hub, not an elite administrative centre.
Tours, education, and activation of the space	• Tours are seen as a key, achievable intervention that serve multiple purposes such as increasing access, revealing hidden histories and building student ownership. They are seen by many participants as a low risk, high impact way to activate the space.

	• Possible formats include student-led tours, themed tours (history, protest, architecture, film), public and school engagement. • Increase teaching opportunities by incorporating lectures and education to teach people on the exhibits and existing history. • Using pre-recorded audio guides, storytelling and walking tours could also generate finance. *"Experimental learning to get students to deliver tours…"* *"Monthly themed guided tours"* *"Open up lectures to the public".*

4.4 Trust and decision-making

Theme	Summary of responses
Exclusion from decision-making	• There is a clear lack of trust between students and leadership. Students don't understand governance structures and who makes decisions or controls funding. • Participants called for anonymous feedback channels, regular workshops, and student-led governance structures. • Participants recognised their own bias in decision-making e.g. *"decision making should include people who are unbiased, I am biased because I work here".* *"Student voice is being silenced at the moment."* *"The first time… students see senior leadership is at graduation."*
Student trust	• Student voices and presence need to be incorporated into decision-making and ideas from the students are welcomed by the senior leadership team. • Currently there is limited trust between students and senior leadership team. • There should be more meetings [like this workshop] where students can anonymously provide ideas and recommendations to inform decisions without repercussions or fear of repercussions.
Political expression	• There is frustration around political expression including removal of memorials and protests and restrictions on activism. • There is recognition from participants that there is fear of protest which has created more controlled environment.

	• Students feel the space serves as a reminder of the university's core power structures and leadership issues (e.g., how the leadership team handled student Palestine protests). *"Fear of protest, more inaccessible than ever before. Controlled to what extent".*

5. Survey Responses

Surveys were placed in parts of the Old College. Staff, students and public were all welcome to submit a response. It is important to note that the majority of survey responses were from staff, and this could be due to the nature of the Old College not being as accessible to students and the public. 40 respondents participated in a survey.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree / Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel Old College is accessible to me (I know how and when I can get access)	3	5	4	9	19
I feel Old College is an inclusive space (in terms of how welcome I feel as an individual or as part of a group)	2	8	7	11	12
I know about the histories of the building and its artworks	3	7	15	10	5
I would like more information about the histories of the building and its artworks	-	-	5	18	17
I think the artworks at Old College adequately represent the histories of the University and figures who have contributed to the development of the institution	7	9	11	7	6
I would like to know more about unrepresented individuals who have contributed to the development of the University	-	-	4	14	22
I feel Old College and its artworks reflect my heritage	6	6	13	10	5
I am aware that the artworks on display are part of the University collections	-	2	4	11	23
I would like to see more of the University artwork collections	-	-	6	17	17

I would like to see more access to Old College for staff and students	-	4	11	6	19
I would like to see more access to Old College for the public	2	6	11	11	10
I am aware of the University's Race Review published in 2025	-	1	9	11	19
I have ideas on how Old College could be more accessible and inclusive	1	3	18	13	6

Further detail on the above answers
• The spaces in old college should be open to all students.
• It would be good to have regular change of artwork at the bottom of Playfair stairs
• There are a number of ill-defined terms in the questions, not least 'accessible' and 'inclusive'. Answers can only really be given with respect to particular notions of inclusion, in the context of particular aims. For example, one aim might be to represent the university's history (and particularly that of its leadership) accurately. It seems fair to say this is the basis of much of the current decoration. It's far from the only possible aim (and that the aim may or may not be fulfilled currently) but it isn't obviously a bad thing in itself. This would have different implications for the very meaning of inclusion, compared to other possible aims. There should be serious and honest consideration of these questions, and we should be wary of any judgments based on looser notions.
• Accessibility - have the internal lift converted to a proper evacuation lift to allow greater access for wheelchair users and those with mobility conditions and limitations. Improve the lighting in the Playfair and the staircase, not just for H&S reasons, but to allow the artwork and the areas themselves to be see in all their glory. A careful, expert clean of the whole of the Playfair, floor to ceiling would also help show the detailing around the walls, cornices and ceiling off a lot more. Information - more info on who the portraits/bust are of - not just names, dates and the odd job title - what did they stand for, what were their views, why are they commemorated (when others are not?). Context to their actions and words, how they compare with modern thinking. How did some of the benefactors make their money?
• "Position the portraits lower so that they no longer ""look down"" on students and visitors, alongside descriptions of who they were, and their impacts both positive and negative on the university, the city, and the world at large. The heritage of the university is important to see and acknowledge in all its complexity. Rotate portraits regularly and include more recent figures and artworks."
• I daily walk past the gallery and busts of old white men and do not feel represented. It may be historical, but it is oppressive and uninviting.

• I am aware of the Race Review but haven't had a chance to read it.
• "The overall impression of the artwork is that it mainly represents older white men. While these men are part of the University's history, they were able to be so due to their societal, economic and political advantages and privileges (sex, ethnicity, social class etc). Therefore, I think equal weight should be given to others who although they may be a smaller part of the University's history, contributed despite their lack of advantages and privileges. I appreciate this may take more research as women and minorities tend to be written out of history but a Russell Group research intensive university should be able to do it. Also, there is a portrait at the top of the main stairs (next to the further stairs to the next floor) with a plaque underneath which mentions the East India Company. My very minimal knowledge of the EIC is that they were involved in some atrocities in India. This sounds like the sort of thing the project will be looking into and I would be interested in more context for this portrait. "
• Its mysteries are slowly unfolding. I have done a very small amount of research on the building and its art works, and I brought a community group in to give a tour. I have been asked to repeat this tour and plan to do so in May.
• "Having used rooms in OC (south side) for multiple university and public-facing events over the past decades, I find the current art collection highly exclusive (historic portraits and busts). To have 100% white male representation of busts in Playfair, and I think all but 1 portrait in the Raeburn, Elder, Lee and Carstares Rooms male (and 100% white), makes me feel highly uncomfortable as a female academic, and embarrassed during public events. The artworks present a discriminatory narrative of who has contributed to the institution, and urgently need to be updated to better reflect our community's herstory. Currently the charges as a member of staff for using the South Side of Old College for University Events can be prohibitive for particular projects (unlike North side, which does not incur charges)."
• Old College is a working space for various high-profile sections which are highly confidential so don't think it's feasible for it to be opened up to create more access to the public/staff/students especially when USG/Registry/Estates are working on minimal staffing levels. This would cause security chaos.
• While the portraits' subjects and artists represent a very narrow group, I don't think these should be list - but displayed alongside others representing more diverse groups. In the case of really significant assets like our Raeburn paintings I think they should continue to be a point of pride as hugely important cultural artefacts. I think the Raeburn Room for instance can remain as an intact collection - but other displays should be diverse.
• I understand the need for security, but the front reception desk makes it feel that the space is not inclusive of all. The reception employees are always friendly and helpful, but just the fact that you have to give your name and be buzzed into the building makes it feel exclusive and not open to all.
• I would love to see more access to the building for staff, students and members of the public. In the first instance this could be done with e.g. one open day a semester so that it's not too onerous (although I suppose the question would then become who is responsible for organising these events?) Longer term it would be great to see the space being

integrated more into teaching and public events so that it feels more part of the university at large. In an ideal world I think the space has real potential to become a community hub for the university which is something that is missing at the moment - somewhere for people to go where they feel like this is the university and I am a part of it
• I think there should be more information online and more footage online of current artworks and building use by school groups etc.
• Old College is the historic heart of the University of Edinburgh and all visitors (staff, students, public, University visitors) should feel that they are entering the heart of a historic world class university, which is proud of its history and its contributions both historic and current to the globe. Major academics and leaders from the University's past and present should be represented and I think this is what most people visiting Old College would want to see.
• As someone who moved to Edinburgh from overseas to do postgraduate research on Scottish rhetoricians, it was quite special to see portraits of the people I studied (ex. Hugh Blair) casually on display.
• A balance has to be struck here - it would be a shame eg to lose the wonderful oil paintings and the busts in the Playfair library. But the experience could be augmented by artworks showing diverse aspects of UoE history... representation of LGBT+ would be particularly good.

A display of contemporary artworks from the University collection was installed on the ground floor of the main stairway in 2024, replacing four historic portraits. Please share any comments or feedback
• Great 5 stars
• Beautiful
• great contrast to the works above, and i love the dark background - very striking and contemporary!
• Per above it would be good for these to be changed on a more regular occasion
• It works as a self-contained contrast to the more traditional decor around it. It is no bad thing to display some of the university's collection here and the overall visual impression is positive. Some of the works are better than others, but that is to be expected. We might re-think whether overtly political art is appropriate here. (Who gets to choose and might it seem different if the vibe shifts and there is pressure to display other messages?) Beyond this space, it should be borne in mind that such works are not straightforwardly interchangeable with the existing paintings: historically and situationally relevant portraiture is not the same thing as 'artworks' in general.
• I like the idea but much of the artwork was just bad. We should use contemporary art that is as good as our heritage pieces or it looks tokenistic
• Excellent
• I'm not as keen on some of it compared to the other artwork. Although there is a bit of info about some of it, I'd like to know more - were the artists connected to the Uni, former

students, what else have they done and why that particular piece was selected to be in placed here. I think it is good to have a mix of the old style portraits to reflect and remember the history of the building and the university, along side work by new artists with connections to the University - so again, maybe more information and context about all the art would help our understanding of the art, it's meaning and purpose, which would hopefully mean we could appreciate it more.
• This is great, and I'd like to see works like this throughout the building.
• The new installation is far more appealing, more reflective of society today and more interesting than old white men.
• The new display has transformed the space for the better, both aesthetically and in terms of how it makes me feel as I enter the building and use the stairs daily. I like the contrast between the two sets of displays - it is good to have these viewable separately, and also together, gives pause for thought and reflection and makes one look at the historical artworks with fresh eyes. I also just think the updated artwork display has been thoughtfully and beautifully executed and curated - big fan!
• I think this is a positive change and means the artwork in the stairwell represents the more modern history of the University as well as the historic artwork up the stairs.
• Much improved! I would like to see more of this throughout OC.
• I thought this was great, as it shows another side of the University's collection and offers a nice counterpart to the more historic paintings. Also appreciate the more cheery pop of colour as you walk by.
• Far more representative of the communities here, and a real breath of fresh air
• I think this is positive.
• I was surprised at first at the change but I really like it now. It's much warmer, more contemporary than before and I like that it uses students' work.
• great, I loved it.
• I hope that diversity of subject and painter will also add to the accessibility of art on display. It' great to see diversity, but the new pieces aren't a great deal more engaging and accessible as the "pale male" ones. A really obvious connection to the University is good: I'd like to see portraits of Noreen Murray or Lesley Yellowlees etc to balance the Portraits of white male Principals.
• The space has been decorated nicely and I love the round seating area. I personally love the artwork, although I understand it might be a bit contemporary for everyone's taste. Some interpretive signage would be nice to explain how the pieces connect to the university. Also, in the room upstairs (the former Principal's Office, I believe) there is a large canvas depicting an island scene. I always wonder about that piece - I really like it and I think it suits the space well. It would be nice to know more about the artist - are they alumni or faculty? Just knowing more about how it all connects back to the university would be nice.
• I love the new display! It looks fabulous- love the contrast between the old and the new, the way that the new art works are able to provoke discussion in dialogue with the portraits that are already there. Makes the space come alive.

• much better
• I like the new display. I get the impression it is discouraging smoking in young people which seems relevant.
• I do not like the artwork chosen (one in particular is inappropriate) but I do like the presentation of the artwork
• It seems out of place • love it • Not an improvement.

What would you like to see coming from this project?	No. of Votes
More information about the history the building and the people who have shaped it	29
More information on the artworks	26
More ways for students and staff to utilise the building	18
More ways for the public to access the building (including tours, open days, workshops, etc)	17
Updating the artwork on display (including other artworks from the University's collection, or commissioning new pieces)	22
More information on the University's values and how these are demonstrated through displays of artworks, information, and memorials across this campus	14
Information panels/texts that acknowledge Old College's links to colonialism, enslavement and other forms of exploitation, detailed by the Race Review and other critical research	16
Online resources on the Old College spaces and information on the histories and artworks	19
Other	3

What would you like to give further details on your answers?
The uni has such a vast art collection, it's a shame that it's not on show/rotation for more to see it
Please don't interpret these answers as simple conservatism. What I would like to see is for any change to be well thought through, with reference to coherent aims and respect for the particular functions and history of Old College, and a recognition that a sense of institutional heritage is entirely consistent with our values.
We should be able to celebrate & reflect our heritage as an enlightenment institution whilst including greater representation. The biggest gap is female representation given we are half the population. There could be representation of our first female graduates and professors or paintings by women artists from the 17th &18th century
I think there has to be a clear understanding of what this building is used for and some of the restrictions and concerns that those who use it on a regular basis have. It would be great to say 'just open it more to the public and students' but there are security and safety concerns in doing that. It is primarily a place of work for those on the south and south-east side of the building, and any changes to who else accesses the building has to be very carefully thought out and controlled.

That said, it would be great to be able to offer specific times during the year when it was more open to the public, for guided tours of the Playfair and ground floor meeting rooms. This could be extended to local schools, community groups - as long as it was properly risk assessed and managed, this would I think be possible and would help build a better relationship with the Uni and the community.
Take down the pictures of honorary doctorate recipients— this is empty PR and the figures do not reflect true links to the university. Particularly important, stop honouring figures on the Epstein list including Bill Clinton and JK Rowling.
I'm not convinced we should 'lock in' references to the Race Review or to colonialism/enslavement within information panels for two reasons: it was a report produced at a point in time and embeds a largely negative view of our past around one very important but specific area of oppression. To be thorough one would need to also consider gender, and other aspects of underrepresentation/oppression of the past, all of which would take away from simply explaining the history and allowing viewers to appreciate the art and building for what it is and in their own way.
Any information should be in an easily accessible format - I personally find reading small plaques, inscriptions, or info boards tedious and much prefer touch screens where I can access the information I want. Short videos are also helpful and could be accessed on personal devices or tablets.
The fundamental issue (far more than the age of the paintings or the gender of the artists) is that portraits depict a very non-diverse group of subjects. Portraits of others who have contributed significantly to University life will make more of a difference than including abstract art by diverse artists.
These are all brilliant ideas; I'd love to see any or all of them happen. Given the prominence of the art collection in the space, and the potential option to contextualise it with other objects from the university collections, I'd love to see this as a space where the importance of the university's heritage collections could really be highlighted and appreciated.
I have only seen the stairwell artworks mainly.
I think it is important to continue to include major figures (academics, leaders, benefactors) in the University's history, including King James VI and Robert Rollock. I don't think there's a portrait of Robert Reid and feel there should be too as another major enabler of the foundation of the University.

6. Appendices

6.1 University Voices Workshop Participant Demographics

24 people responded to attending a university voices workshop. 10 people attended the first workshop and 9 people attended the second workshop. 18 participants completed a sign-up form. Prior to the university workshops we ran a specific student initial workshop which comprised of 6 students invited directly via the Heritage Collections Team. This group we do not have demographic data for.

What is your relationship to the University and Old College?	No. of respondents
Current student of the University of Edinburgh	4
Former student of the University of Edinburgh	2
Staff member based at Old College	1
Staff member based elsewhere at the University	8
Other (x1 honorary fellow, x1 general council member, x1 current staff member and student who has just finished)	3

How would you describe your relationship to the Old College building? Do you ever use the following spaces: Playfair Library, and the Raeburn, Elder, Lee and Carstares Rooms?
I have attended events in the Playfair Library and taken part in classes/tours of the building
I have regularly used Old College spaces for teaching and for hosting conferences or events. This includes the common spaces, Playfair Library, Raeburn Room and classrooms elsewhere.
As a student, I had only been to Old College for big events, in the Playfair Library. In my role as an intern of the Old College project, I have studied the paintings and space usage of Old College. Now, in my role as EUSA president, I am often in spaces of Old College for meetings of the uni's governing body and with members of the Senior Leadership team.
Architect
I have participated in teaching in the Old College. I have brought MScR Collections and Curating Practices students to attend guided tour as part of their course seminar.
I regularly host events on behalf of my department using these spaces for both staff, students and international visitors.
I am also a former member of staff and a current member of the General Council Business Committee. I have used and continue to use the meeting rooms and have worked in old College.
Black Geography Course
Playfair Library (for events and conferences) and also as part of University Court meeting [redacted]
Playfair for collaborative sessions with academic colleagues / graduations
I have attended many protests that have highlighted the connection between Old College and the university's colonial legacies as well as violent presents. I have visited the Playfair Library for several events, and have visited the rest in a course I have audited. I have also often visited the Student InfoPoint/Immigration Service which is connected to the relevant wing of Old College.
I usually go to Playfair Library for events, especially related to the Talbot Rice Gallery. The other rooms seem to be set up for "invitees only", a selective space not very welcoming for outsiders. I just took a peak into those rooms during an event, but never entered as an invited guest. Moving around these rooms does not feel like passing by classrooms in the campus. Even when they are empty, it looks like it's forbidden and seems very elitist spaces.
I have organised classes with the art collections curators and staff of Playfair Library and the Raeburn room
Yes, I use regularly in my role on the Business Committee of the General Council
Yes - not often in there for lessons, but have attended events in one of the lecture theatres and used public studying/meeting spaces in the playfair library.
Have used Playfair library a few times for various CAHSS events and SPS graduations.

As a sabbatical officer I've had meetings in here

Since we are trying to gain views from people who may not have had their voices heard before, have you ever contributed your views to the University of Edinburgh with regards to similar or related topics?	No. of respondents
Yes	3
Maybe/not sure	5
No	10

What is your age?	No. of respondents
18-24	1
25-34	4
35-44	5
45-50	2
51-60	2
61-70	3
N/A	1

How would you describe your gender?	No. of respondents
Woman	13
Man	2
Non-binary	2
N/A	1

How would you describe your ethnicity?	No. of respondents
White British	4
White Scottish	2
White	2
Caribbean	1
Black	1
Asian	1
Nepalese	1
Mainland Chinese	1
White German	1
White non-British	1
Greek	1
N/A	2

6.2 Staff Workshop Participant Demographics

15 people signed up to attend a staff workshop and 13 people attended.

What is your relationship to the University and Old College?	No. of respondents
Staff member based at Old College	7
Staff member based elsewhere at the University (x1 library, x2 main library/st Cecilia's hall, x1 SRS Department, Boilerhouse at High School Yards - Community Access to Rooms scheme, x1 anatomy department at Teviot Place, x1 security department at Infirmary street)	6

What is your age?	No. of respondents
35-44	3
45-50	1
51-60	8
N/A	1

How would you describe your gender?	No. of respondents
Woman	8
Man	4
Non-binary	1

How would you describe your ethnicity?	No. of respondents
White British	2
White Scottish	7
White	1
Scottish	1
African	1
N/A	1

6.3 Survey Demographics

40 respondents participated in a survey.

What is your relationship to the University and Old College?	No. of respondents
Current student of the University of Edinburgh	7
Former student of the University of Edinburgh	1
Staff member based at Old College	23
Staff member based elsewhere at the University	6

Alumnus, partner or funder into the University of Edinburgh	0
Public visitor	2
Other	1

What is your age?	No. of respondents
16-18	0
18-24	2
25-30	1
31-40	8
41-50	10
51-60	8
61-70	2
71-80	0
81+	0
N/A	8

How would you describe your gender?	No. of respondents
Woman	19
Man	11
Non-binary	0
Gender-fluid	1
N/A	8

How would you describe your ethnicity?	No. of respondents
White British	4
White Scottish	6
White	5
Scottish	5
White Irish	1
Asian British	1
White Asian	1
Asian	1
N/A	14

How regularly do you visit, or have you visited any of the following rooms at Old College: main reception, main stairway, Playfair Library, and the Raeburn, Elder, Lee and Carstares Rooms?	No. of respondents
I regularly use the building for work or study	18
I use the building daily	9
I have attended multiple University activities or events	4

Other	4
I have attended multiple public events	2
I visited once for a university activity or event (including conferences, exams, meetings)	2
I visited once for a public event (including Doors Open Day)	1
I visited once for a private event (including conferences, dinners, etc)	0
I have attended multiple private events	0

7.Workshop feedback

Workshop feedback is always anonymous and has been collated from multiple workshops including the initial student workshop, staff workshops and university voices workshops.

I really enjoyed this workshop. The organisers did a great job creating a safe space to share honest thoughts and feedback. I learned a lot from my peers and felt satisfied with my own contributions--thank you for having us!

I really appreciate that there was a third party involved in the process.

I found the workshop really interesting, it was good to learn more about the space and discuss how it may be used going forward.

A very well-organised workshop. The vision presented by Claire Walsh was very inspiring - it really felt like positive change is possibility but I'm not sure that I have faith that the ideas we seriously debated will find any traction with the deciding committee/board.

It was disappointing that there were so few participants (particularly given that the first session had been cancelled due to lack of interest). It was also very disappointing that the majority of participants were from ECA and had a particular agenda. It would have been preferable to have a more diverse group of participants.

8. Get in Touch

To speak to the Deciding Matters team about the contents of this report, please contact:

Annie Cook | annie@decidingmatters.co.uk