

Consultation on merger of Edinburgh University and The Art College

The Education Secretary has launched a consultation on a proposed merger between Edinburgh University and Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) to ensure an open and transparent decision making process.

Earlier this week, plans were submitted to the Scottish Government for approval after the governing bodies of both institutions formally approved the merger.

Ministers today began a 12-week consultation seeking views on whether the proposed merger should go ahead before making a final decision early next year.

Edinburgh University's ruling court voted unanimously in support of the merger with their ECA counterparts also voting in favour by a strong majority. The proposals have also received the backing of the student and staff representatives at ECA as well as the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA). If approved, the intention of the institutions is for the merger to be implemented on August 1, 2011.

Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, said:

"The institutions themselves have voted overwhelmingly in favour of the merger. However, we firmly believe in open and transparent government and I would like to stress that no decision has been reached by the Scottish Government.

"We will pay very close attention to all the views and representations expressed to us in the coming weeks as we

approach our decision.

“It is important that whatever decision we reach is absolutely transparent. Therefore, we will publish all responses on-line unless confidentiality is requested.”

The consent of Scottish Ministers is required, in terms of section 47 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, to any proposal to merge an institution designated a higher education institution under the Act (in this case ECA). The legislation requires that Scottish Ministers consult the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Governing Body of the institution to be closed.