Item 05

Glasgow Kelvin College

Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review

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1. Background

1.1 The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (2022) states that:

"*D24 The board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness every three to five years. The board should determine the timing for this externally facilitated review as part of the annual effectiveness review. The board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated evaluation) and board development plan (including progress on previous year's plan) to its funding body and publish them online*".

1.2 As the internal auditors for Glasgow Kelvin College, we have been commissioned to conduct the 2024/25 iteration of the full externally facilitated effectiveness review (EFER) described in the Code, which builds on the previous EFER which was issued in March 2021.

1.3 The College Development Network (CDN) Guidance Note on Conducting Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Reviews, which was updated in June 2022, states that "*External Effectiveness Reviews (EERs) should be carried between three to five years after the previous review. The Board should determine the timeframe for the next external review as part of their annual effectiveness review, considering progress against the action plan that resulted from the previous review and the outcome of the annual effectiveness review. The timeframe should meet the governance related development needs of the board and should be responsive to the dynamic nature of governing as a process and may change year on year"*.

1.4 The Foreword by the Chair of the Good Governance Steering Group, which oversaw the updates made to the 2022 Code, states that:

"*Colleges and regional strategic bodies receive substantial public funding and also operate in an increasingly commercial and enterprising way. We value the significant contribution college board members make to governing our colleges and regional strategic bodies, and to their stewardship of taxpayer's money, ensuring its efficient and effective use. Boards are expected to innovate, pursue new opportunities and take measured risks in delivering what is best for their stakeholders. Against this background, it is right and proper that the highest standards of governance and propriety are expected of our boards and those individuals who serve them.*

This Code of Good Governance codifies the principles of good governance for learners and learning that already exist in our colleges and promotes accountability and continuous improvement in how colleges and regional strategic bodies are governed. The Code is based on key principles and has been written in a way that is mandatory and anticipates compliance. All colleges that receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) or from a regional strategic body must comply with the Code as a term and condition of grant. Exceptions should be rare and must be explained publicly. In addition to demonstrating good governance, colleges and regional strategic bodies must also ensure compliance with their statutory and other obligations.

The governance professional role is vital in providing guidance to the board on its legal and other obligations. Colleges have an important individual and collective role to play in promoting economic, social and cultural well-being. We expect this Code to provide the essential underpinning to help discharge that role to the highest standards possible".

2. Scope and Objectives

2.1 The scope agreed with the College for the 2024/25 iteration of the review was to observe the 11 December 2024 meeting of the Board of Management meeting, as required by the Code. The CDN Guidance on how to conduct the EFER states the following:

"It is suggested that the effectiveness review should cover the five sections of the Code of Good Governance:

- *Leadership and Strategy*
- *Quality of the Student Experience*
- *Accountability*
- *Effectiveness*
- *Relationships and Collaboration"*

2.2 The objective of our review was to fulfil the role of external faciltator, as described in the CDN Guidance note, in order to assess the College's compliance with the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges and to identify any improvement actions which could be added to the College's rolling governance action plans to strengthen the governance arrangements within the College.

3. Approach

3.1 Following discussion with the Secretary to the Board of Management (in their role as governance professional for the College), it was agreed that Option 3iii, as described in the Guidance Note, would be completed; namely '*The facilitator undertakes 1 to 1 interviews with some or all Board Members and staff based on the proforma / questionnaire'*. The issues arising from these interviews were triangulated and then pressure tested as part of a desktop review of a comprehensive suite of documentation collated by the Director of Estates and Corporate Services.

3.2 One to one interviews were arranged with all Board Members. Unfortunately, the ongoing internal dispute within Unison meant that we were unable to conduct the one to one interview with one Board member.

3.3 The questions covered in each of the one-to-one discussions were tailored for the individual Board Member, to allow detailed discussion on the specific areas of the Code which were most pertinent to their specific role on the Board and Board sub committees. The verbal responses were then corroborated against the responses provided to the questionnaire issued. This allowed themes to be identified around strengths in the existing governance arrangements and allowed potential areas for improvement or strengthening in arrangements to be identified and explored.

3.4 The results of these discussions have been collated and mapped against the Code. The issues raised were then pressure tested against a raft of corporate documentation which was collated as part of this review. This included detailed evidence to support a College self-assessment against each section of the Code and also contained information on the way that the improvement actions from the previous EFER have been monitored and implemented.

4. Overall Conclusion

4.1 Overall, our review concludes that from a Board Member perspective, the College governance arrangements are operating well, with a number of strengths highlighted. The information gathered from the one to one discussions, did highlight some potential improvement areas, which are designed to enhance the existing governance arrangements and build on the solid foundations already developed. This feedback, together with our review of the College's own self-assessment against the Code, allows us to conclude that the College continues to demonstrate high levels of compliance with the requirements of the Code.

4.2 One of the key changes introduced in the 2022 iteration of the Code was the introduction of Trade Union members on to the Board. Given the previous observer status of trade union representatives on the Board, it is perhaps unsurprising that the College has adapted well to this change, recognising that the role of a trade union member on a College Board is extremely challenging in the current financial environment, where significant reductions in staffing are required to deliver a workable financial model.

4.3 There was a high degree of Non-Executive Board Member engagement in this review, which reflects a high degree of engagement with the College in their role as individual Board Members. It is clear from our discussions that the last two years have been an extremely challenging period for the Board, with a number of difficult decisions having to be taken. Our discussions with Board Members highlighted that in two specific instances there have opposing views on the correct way to proceed, with difficult conversations required to reach a consensus which the whole Board could accept. However, the way in which the Board has collectively reacted to these situations demonstrates the strength of the College's governance arrangements and a high degree of commitment and resilience from all Board members.

4.4 The challenging financial position for the College, and the wider HE/FE sector, has meant that there has been an understandable focus on the delivery of the College Operating Plan Update, which was submitted to the 12 December 2022 meeting of the Board of Management. The College Operating Plan was developed collaboratively, with absolute transparency for the Board, staff and trade unions on the steps required to manage the challenging financial position which had been outlined in the summer of 2022 following the publication of the new Glasgow Kelvin College Strategy 2022 – 2027 in January 2022.

4.5 A number of Board Members highlighted a degree of weariness around the recurring discussions on financial challenges, and the need to deliver cash releasing savings. They explained that their primary motivation for joining the Board was not to oversee the implementation of difficult financial decisions, which will clearly impact on the student experience. However, Board Members demonstrated a high level of understanding of the financial context in which the College is operating and a desire to make sure that they continue to provide the strategic oversight required to allow the College to navigate this challenging period. The Principal advised that going forward, workforce planning will become even more challenging, and therefore the maintenance of openness and transparency in communicating any changes required to the College delivery model will be imperative in maintaining a good relationship between the Board of Management and staff, students and stakeholders.

4.6 In addition, the cross-committee membership on the Finance and Resources Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee was highlighted by several Board Members as being crucial in understanding not only the financial decisions which required to be made, but also the implications these decisions could have on the learner experience. However, this is not possible without a high degree of Board Member commitment, with several Board Members interviewed explaining that they are members of at least two Board sub-committees.

4. Overall Conclusion (Conclusion)

4.7 The membership across the Board and Board sub committees includes a diverse range of skills, which are available to provide an effective level of support and challenge to the College Senior Management Team (SMT). The general feedback from interviewees presented a positive perception of compliance with the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges. Board Members interviewed provided positive feedback on the performance of the governance professional; the strong management oversight of governance arrangements by the Director of Estates and Corporate Services; the quality of the committee papers presented by management; and the support provided by the administrative functions of the College, which allow the governance arrangements to function effectively.

4.8 A number of crucial changes in key postholders are imminent, with the planned departure of the Principal and the governance professional. In addition, the future tenure of the current Chair of the Board of Management remains unclear. However, our review concludes that the work undertaken by College management and the Board of Management has built solid governance foundations, which should allow the College to manage the departure of these key individuals effectively, despite the loss of significant corporate memory and knowledge from the organisation.

5. Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the College Non-executive Board Members and the Secretary to the Board of Management, the Principal, the Director of Estates and Corporate Services, and the Governance and Executive Support Manager who provided the input required to allow us to progress this independent review.

6. Findings

6.1 As highlighted above, our review provides independent confirmation that the positive view of the governance framework expressed by Board Members in the one to one meetings and through the completed questionnaires is robust and that the College can demonstrate a high level of compliance with the Code. Our review highlighted a number of areas where the College can demonstrate particular strengths in specific aspects of the Code. Our review also highlighted specific areas where there is perhaps scope for improvement or enhancement to the current arrangements. Both strengths and areas for improvement are summarised below. The detailed observations, recommendations and agreed management responses for each of the improvement actions is set out below, grouped under each of the five sections of the Code. It is proposed that any improvement actions arising from this review should be incorporated into the rolling Governance Action Plan, which is reported to the Audit and Risk Committee by the Director of Estates and Corporate Services, thereby building on any governance activity already underway. These are summarised in Section 7 below.

6.2 The recommendations arising from the last Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review, which was issued in March 2021, has been monitored through a rolling Governance Action Plan, with updates provided to the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board of Management. These recommendations have been supplemented by actions arising from the College's own annual self-evaluation process, actions arising from the annual Board Member self-evaluation process, the SFC Review of Assurance and Outcomes and issues arising from the Standards Commission for Scotland Guidance – Model Code of Conduct. The previous recommendations were grouped under the following headings within the Code:

- *Section A – Leadership and Strategy*
- *Section B – Student Experience*
- *Section E – Relationships and Collaboration*

6.3 The body of evidence provided as part of this review, and reported to the Board, demonstrates significant progress in addressing these improvement actions. Specific actions taken to date includes:

- Mapping of links to local, regional and national priorities was included as part of the Strategic Plan development arrangements.
- A range of high level KPIs were identified to demonstrate progress towards strategic aims. *The Progress Against Targets: College Strategy 2022/27* report was considered by the Board of Management at its meeting held on 9 October 2024. This was supplemented by a live demonstration of Power BI to provide key data metrics related to overarching strategic objectives.
- In August 2024, the Principal reported to the Board the considerable progress and lead role the College has played in the development of regional and national priorities in partnership with our local Economic Partnership, Glasgow City Region. Key priorities were innovation, skills and the consolidation of existing regional activity.
- The Student Association Constitution was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management in June 2023.
- The then, Clerk to the Board, initiated additional contact with student board members. He discussed with them ways to develop and improve overall support arrangements which included meetings/discussions with them to go over Board papers ahead of meetings to ask any questions they may have.
- A section to capture the 'Impact on Students' was added to all Board of Management papers to allow Student Representatives on the Board to have a particular focus on the impact of the relevant paper on their fellow students and this should drive further discussion.

6. Findings (Continued)

6.3 (Continued)

- The Director of Student Experience and Enterprise presents an annual report on Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement to the Board of Management. This provides members with an update on employer and stakeholder partnerships and engagement activities / initiatives, including the financial benefit on the College.
- The annual partnership and stakeholder engagement report was presented to the Board of Management in August 2024. This report provided an insight into the breadth and depth of the College's partnership and stakeholder engagement. It addressed partnerships covering education and skills, operations and governance as well as broader partnerships that include politicians, the media, community groups and others. The report identifies new partnerships for development as well as drawing out opportunities to develop and strengthen existing partnerships.

Strengths

Our review identified a number of strengths in the existing governance arrangements and these are summarised below:

6.4 **Section A – Leadership and Strategy**

a) The Code of Conduct for members of the Board of Management of Glasgow Kelvin College, specifically references the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 and the nine general Principles of Public Life in Scotland. Upon appointment, Board Members sign to confirm that they have received this document. The Code of Conduct is published on the College website.

b) In general Board Members feel that they can shape the vision, direction, character and values of the College through Board meetings. As highlighted in our one to one discussions with Board Members, there has been considerable Board scrutiny of the delivery of the Operating Plan. Given the nature of these discussions this has resulted in difficult conversations around the implications of the decisions taken to manage the College's financial position, which have significant implications for staff (and therefore staff and trade union representatives on the Board) and students (and therefore the Student President).

c) An Ethos and Values Framework was launched for session 2019/20, alongside the new Student Charter and this has been embedded within the Staff Handbook. This is due to be refreshed in 2025, following the appointment of the new Principal.

d) Overall Board Members were satisfied with the level of performance information provided and they particularly highlighted the proactive stance of the Vice Principal Operations in delivering training and developing detailed reporting to the Board, which has allowed Board Members to build a much clearer picture of the scale of the financial challenges and the way in which the College is managing these challenges. In addition, the continued work to develop Power BI reporting capacity was welcomed by the Board.

e) A self-evaluation session is carried out annually with the Board of Management, Standing Committees, Standing Committee Chairs and the Chair of the Board. The Board of Management Self-Evaluation Outcomes for 2023/24, and the process for self-evaluation for 2024/25, were reported to the Board of Management by the Secretary to the Board of Management in August 2024.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.4 **Section A – Leadership and Strategy (Continued)**

f) Board Members interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of the need to monitor achievement of the Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model (OFAM) and to align the strategic objectives of the College with regional and national outcomes, although a number of Board Members highlighted the confusing landscape around regional planning and priority setting, which was outwith the control of the College. College management continue to report on the significant changes to the accountability framework for the college and university sectors, which will impact on how the College organises strategic planning and quality enhancement activity in the future. For example, the August 2024 Board of management meeting received a report on the new SFC outcome arrangements. This report explained that the SFC's Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model guidance sets out new accountability arrangements for colleges and universities, including:
- the removal of Regional Outcome agreements to be replaced with a new national Outcome Framework and submission of annual Contextual Commentary reports; and
- a new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), a much-reduced role for Education Scotland and a new peer-led review model overseen by the Qualifications Assurance Agency (QAA). Colleges and universities will also have to submit annual Self-Evaluation and Activity Plan (SEAP) reports.

g) The Board receive a mid-year report and an annual report on the progress being made towards achievement of the Strategic Objectives. The report presented to the October 2024 meeting of the Board of Management provided a summary of progress towards the achievement of Strategic Priorities and the Objectives stated within the College's Strategic Plan 2022-27. This report reviewed progress against the Strategy for the academic year 2023-24.

h) An Equality and Diversity Policy is in place which was produced by the Board of Management in partnership with management, trade unions, learners, student and staff. The latest iteration of the policy was reviewed at the June 2024 meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee and was subsequently approved by the Board of Management in June 2024. The policy is available on the College website and is next due for review in July 2027. This policy document is supplemented by a Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure, which was reviewed at the June 2024 meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee and was subsequently considered for approval by the Board of Management in December 2024. Following Board discussion, it was agreed that specific wording would be amended. It was also agreed that a table/route map would be added to the Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure to ensure clarity of the informal and formal procedures, providing a link to signpost to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and the Grievance Policy and Procedure.

i) Reports are presented to the Board regarding Board recruitment exercises. This provides the opportunity for Board Members to highlight the need for a specific focus in the forthcoming recruitment exercise in order to maintain a representative balance on the Board. An update on Board recruitment was presented to the October 2024 meeting of the Board of management. Although there was a general consensus amongst Board Members that there were no significant skills gaps, although the recent departure of a Board Member who had skills in marketing was identified as a potential gap, as was the future need for a Board Member with cyber security expertise. Our subsequent discussions with the Secretary to the Board of Management confirmed that this is an active focus for the ongoing Board recruitment activity. This is raised as an improvement action below.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.4 **Section A – Leadership and Strategy (Continued)**

j) Given the impact of the financial challenges which the College has faced, and continues to face, we had some concerns around the way that this might impact on Board Members perception of the College's capacity to deliver on the College ethos, which is "*Glasgow Kelvin College's ethos derives from its commitment to Excellence, Progression and Enterprise. It seeks to provide learning opportunities of the highest quality, which engage learners from the widest range of backgrounds, and support their progression to employment or to further study. It seeks to develop enterprise in individuals – as a core skill for learning, life and work; and to support enterprise in both organisations and communities – by developing the capacity of both employers and employees and of community representatives"*. However, the Board Members interviewed demonstrated a high degree of understanding of the social and economic needs of the communities which the College serves and presented a united voice in terms of the continued importance of the College as a community asset to improve the lives of people in these communities. One example of the work undertaken was the report on Child Poverty in Glasgow 2024, which was considered at the November 2024 meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee.

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6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.5 **Section B – Quality of the Student Experience**

a) Each meeting of the Board of Management receives an update from the Students Association, which is prepared by the Student President and Student Vice President. As highlighted above, the standard committee template now contains a standing agenda item which allows consideration of the "Impact on Students".
b) The terms of reference for the Learning and Teaching Committee includes the requirement to provide oversight on the quality of learning and teaching and the student experience.
c) A Partnership Agreement is in place between the Students Association and the College, and we confirmed that the 2024/25 version of the Partnership Agreement is available online. As highlighted in paragraph 6.3, above, the Students Association Constitution was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management in June 2023.
d) The Student Presidents are one full time and one part time sabbatical officers, although it was highlighted that one Student president did resign on 6 December 2024. They are normally supported by the Learning and Engagement Officer and although the postholder has been on maternity leave/sickness absence, the Student President highlighted that the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality had stepped in to ensure that there was no dilution in the level of support provided to help them to discharge their responsibilities on the College Board, College Board sub committees, or the GCRB Board.
e) The summary results of the Block 2 Student Experience Survey were reported to the Academic Board on 5 February 2025. The initial results provide insight on the most popular learning and teaching activities and capture feedback on learning environments, learning materials, goals and progress.
f) The mechanisms to ensure effective oversight of the quality and inclusiveness of learning were viewed positively by the Board members surveyed. Quality review and enhancement activity is regularly reported to the Board and its Committees. For example, the report on the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2025 – 2028, which was presented to the Board of Management at the meeting in December 2024, set out a range of approaches which have been used to progress achievement of the goals and objectives set out in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2021 - 2024.

6.6 **Section C – Accountability**

a) Our discussions with Board Members confirmed that they are content with the current meeting timetable which has 50% of Board and Standing Committee meetings held face to face, with the remaining 50% held online via Teams to coincide with darker/winter nights. Although the volume of papers for some Board of Management meetings was highlighted by some Board Members, they were content that the current frequency of meetings does not need to change.
b) In common with the previous EFER, Board Members collectively praised the Chair and the Chairs of the Board Sub Committees for the way in which in person and remote meetings have been conducted and the inclusive approach which has been taken to ensure that all participants can contribute effectively.
c) A register of interest for all Board Members is maintained and is published on the College website.
d) Declarations of Interest are a standing agenda item for all Board committees and Board Members are also encouraged to declare any connections, to ensure absolute transparency. The Standing Orders have a section on declaration of interests and connections which requires that, if a conflict of interest or connection becomes apparent in a meeting, members should not take part in that matter and consider whether it is appropriate to leave the meeting.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.6 Section C – Accountability (Continued)

e) Based on our one to one interviews, the quality of Board and Board subcommittee papers is considered by all Board Members to be very good with papers received timeously. It was apparent from our review of Board papers that a concerted effort has been made to ensure that more junior managers do have the opportunity to assist in compiling reports, thus providing a development opportunity for other staff members to gain practice in Board report writing so that they can assist members of the SMT, as required.

f) The consensus is that the balance between the business considered at Board of Management meetings and at Board subcommittees is good, with adequate opportunity to ask for more detail on the business conducted at Board subcommittees when the relevant minutes are presented at the Board of Management.

g) Our review of the papers prepared for the Board sub committees and the Board of Management confirmed that detailed reports presented to Board Standing Committees are distilled down for the Board of Management in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. Board Members are made aware that should they require more detail, then they have the opportunity to review the fuller report, which is contained in the relevant Standing Committee folder.

h) There has been significant work undertaken by management to refresh the approach to risk management, with work being completed on the Risk Appetite/Risk Categories and an update of the Risk Management Framework, which is embedded across the College and its management levels. The work to develop this refreshed risk management framework was praised by several members of the Audit and Risk Committee, who highlighted that the risk register format is now much more visual and this drives better behaviours by focusing the discussion around the changing or emerging risks, and the effectiveness of mitigating actions or controls in managing the identified risks.

i) Risk management arrangements are formally led by the Board of Management and are operationally led by Vice Principal Operations and Director of Estates and Corporate Services. The Risk Management Framework (November 2024) is documented and is made available to staff on the College's Intranet and published on the College's public facing website, with a review date of November 2027. The Board of Management reviews the College Risk Register twice per year. This analysis is supported by narrative reports on the risk management arrangements and with commentary on the assurances provided. The College Risks are also reviewed by the Board of Management as part of its review and approval of the annual financial statement and the remaining Board Standing Committees also review the College Strategic Risk Register once a year.

j) The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) has delegated authority, on behalf of the Board of Management, to review all College strategic risks via the College Risk Register at each of its quarterly meetings. The Strategic Risk Register is considered at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and the consideration of any risks emerging from committee discussions is captured as part of a risk review standing agenda item which ensures that consideration is given to the implications on the risk register in terms of new or changed risks for the College.

k) As a natural progression from the work already conducted to enhance the risk management arrangements of the College, it was suggested that there may be scope to align specific strategic risks with Board sub-committees, in order to provide the opportunity for further discussions on the risks themselves and the appropriate mitigations. However, it was highlighted in subsequent discussions that deep dives into specific strategic priorities, which arose from the Board self-evaluation process, have allowed more granular discussion at Board sub-committees on cross-cutting themes, with the most recent discussions around cyber security implications at Finance and Resources Committee and Learning and Teaching Committee.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.6 **Section C – Accountability (Continued)**

l) The Audit and Risk Committee is well established, and the membership includes members with specific experience of finance, accounting or auditing as stipulated by the Code. The remit of the Audit & Risk Committee specifically references the committee's responsibility around governance, risk management and the internal control framework.

m) The specific duty to review reports submitted by the College's internal auditors, and to monitor progress in implementation, is reflected in the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk, as is the requirement to monitor the recommendations made by College's external auditors.

n) A closed session with the internal and external auditors is built into the Audit & Risk Committee annual workplan, in line with good practice.

o) Members of the Finance and Resources Committee are specifically precluded from membership of the Audit & Risk Committee.

p) A Remuneration Committee is in place, in line with the requirements of the Code, which determines Senior Staff Pay Policy, the remuneration of the Principal and other appropriate senior staff.

q) Board of Management meeting papers, agendas and minutes are available to view on the College website. These are routinely posted within five days of the meeting taking place.

r) Board papers follow a standard structure with clear purpose and recommendations. The Standing Orders state that "*The Secretary to the Board will ensure that the members of the Board receive the Agenda, papers and minutes for the purpose of the meeting in sufficient time for the reading and digesting of the contents. Normally this will be at least five working days in advance of the meeting*". One proposed enhancement would be to include a standing prompt for Committee Chairs to ask at the start of each meeting whether committee members have had sufficient time to considered all of the papers. However, since all Board Members interviewed confirmed that the timing of receipt of papers was exemplary, no specific improvement action has been included in Section 7 below.

s) The Audit and Risk Committee provides an annual report to the Board setting out what it has done and provides an overall opinion, based on review of reports by internal audit, external audit and other agencies, on the Colleges financial management, control and protection of assets, corporate governance and the control environment. This is used to inform the annual Corporate Governance and Internal Control Statement.

t) The Code of Conduct sets out that Board members must treat other Board members and College staff with respect, and this is covered in the Induction Session held by the Secretary to the Board of Management.

u) All committee minutes are presented to the full Board as well as a summary of the most recent meeting (if the draft minutes have not been written-up) and Board members are free to ask questions about any of the committee minutes. There is an annual self-evaluation process which considers the effectiveness of the Board and its committees, which includes questions around communication.

v) The Secretary to the Board's job description includes the need to develop and maintain relationships with key individuals and to maintain effective communication and engagement.

w) All policies are approved by the appropriate Standing Committee or the Board of Management. The Joint Consultative Committee receives employment policies and reports go to the Board Finance and Resources Committee on staffing matters, with employee relations being a standing item on the agenda.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.6 **Section C – Accountability (Continued)**

x) There is a Joint Consultative Committee with trade union representation for both support and academic staff. The Finance and Resources Committee are informed on issues highlighted by the Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee with the College's recognised Trade Unions, and the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee are provided to the Board. There are two staff members and two union members (EIS/FELA and Unison) on the Board.

y) A staff survey was conducted in 2022/23 with a 20% completion rate. Due to the limited engagement by staff this did not provide a definitive snapshot of staff wellbeing, but we were advised that the data did provide valuable insight into staff resilience levels and provided a useful measure on the impact of existing strategies.

z) A staff survey was not carried out in Academic Year 2023/24 due to the ongoing industrial action. The College next staff survey will be conducted in Academic Year 2025/26, following the appointment of the new Principal. The results of the survey will be shared with College staff and its recognised Trade Union representatives.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.7 **Section D – Effectiveness**

a) The relationship between the Chair of the Board of Management, the Principal and the Secretary to the Board of Management is viewed by other Board Members as extremely effective in delivering for the College. It was recognised by Board Members that the departure of the College Principal, and the imminent departure of the Secretary of the Board of Management, will represent a significant loss of knowledge from the College. However, Board Members expressed satisfaction with the appointment of an experienced Principal and with the interim arrangements put in place to provide cover for the Secretary of the Board of Management.
b) All Board Members interviewed stated that they felt encouraged to contribute in Board meetings and did not feel inhibited in challenging the Principal and the rest of the Senior Management Team, where appropriate.
c) All Board Members interviewed advised that they feel they are treated as full members of the Board. This included Trade Union members of the Board and Student members of the Board.
d) The performance of the Secretary of the Board of Management, and the setting of objectives for 2024/25, were considered at the August 2024 meeting of the Board of Management.
e) Self-evaluations were completed by each individual Board and committee member as an annual activity. The Secretary to the Board of Management collated the results of this self-evaluation exercise and reported them to the Board to Management in August 2024. The self-evaluation process has been formally approved by the Board.
f) The evaluation of the Board Chair is undertaken by the Senior Independent Member, and the evaluation process is supported by a private session with the other Board Members to gather their input. The self-evaluation process considers the effectiveness of the Board and its committees, and also includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the committee Chairs.
g) Progress against the Strategic Plan objectives is reported in a mid-year and end of year report to the Board of Management. An update on the progress against Strategic Priorities for 2023/24 was provided on 9 October 2024 to the Board of Management.
h) The College publishes reports, as required by the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The standard format for committee and Board papers includes a section on equalities which requires members to consider whether any decisions taken will have an impact on equality and, if so, an Equality Impact Assessment must be conducted before progressing. Equalities is included in the People and Culture Update report, which is routinely provided to the Finance and Resources Committee.
i) The Chair of the Board of Management conducts annual one-to-one meetings with individual Board Members to discuss their experiences on the Board and their contribution on Board sub committees during the year, and to look ahead to the following year. Any improvement actions arising from these discussions are fed into the rolling Governance Action Plan, which is reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. All Board Members interviewed stated that these discussions were useful, two-way conversations and that the meetings provided the opportunity to discuss what was working well and to also discuss areas where there was scope for improvement in the existing governance arrangements.
j) The Principal's objectives are reported to the Board in advance of each academic year, allowing the opportunity for input from staff and student representatives on the Board. The performance of the Principal against agreed objectives forms part of the one to one discussions between the Principal and the Chair, Vice Chair and the Secretary to the Board of Management every six months to discuss the achievement of agreed objectives and to set future priorities.
k) As part of the Board induction process Board Members do have the opportunity to access a tour each of the College campuses. This was highlighted as extremely beneficial by a number of Board Members interviewed.

6. Findings (Continued)

Strengths (Continued)

6.8 **Section E – Relationships and Collaboration**

a) Information from a range of bodies, including the Community Planning Partnership and employers, is taken into account in considering the student experience, employability and relevance of learning to industry. The College also provides learning and training through a range of community based facilities.
b) As highlighted in paragraph 6.7 above, there is a Joint Consultative Committee with trade union representation for both support and academic staff.
c) We have received assurances that partnership activity with bodies such as GCRB, local authorities, the Community Planning Partnership, Skills Development Scotland, Glasgow Life and the Wheatley Group follow the principles of effective collaboration.
d) The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality Enhancement is a member of the North East Sector Community Planning Partnership and other staff are involved with other Community Planning Partnership bodies. The College also has a range of interaction with businesses, the public and third sector organisations.
e) The College continues to take an active role in regional activity and both the Principal and Vice Principal have reported on regional engagement to the Board.
f) In relation to GCRB, the Chair of the Board of Management is a member of the GCRB Board and the Principal attends Board meetings by invitation.
g) The Students' Association President is a member of the Board of Management, the Learning and Teaching Committee, and the Academic Board and this provides a mechanism to communicate and capture the student voice. It was highlighted that one Student President resigned on 6 December 2024. There are further opportunities for communication through membership of groups such as the Transformation and Renewal Committee.
h) The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality Enhancement and the Vice Principal Operations have regular meetings with the Students' Association executive and any issues highlighted can be escalated to the Senior Management Team for consideration of the need for reporting to the Board of Management.

7. Improvement Action Plan

We have grouped the improvement actions under the relevant sections of the Code of Good Governance below:

Section A – Leadership and Strategy

Observation	Recommendation
As highlighted above under paragraph 6.4, although there was a general consensus amongst Board Members that there were no significant skills gaps on the Board, the recent departure of a Board Member who had skills in marketing was identified as a potential gap, as was the future need for a Board Member with cyber security expertise. We are aware that the issue around cyber security was raised by the Chair at the December 2024 meeting of the Board of Management, and therefore this issue may already have been addressed during the planned January/February 2025 Board Member recruitment process.	**R1** It is recommended that future Board recruitment exercises should consider the need for targeted recruitment of Board Members with cyber security and marketing expertise.
Management Comments	**Timescales and Responsible Person**
Recommendation accepted. A co-opted member for the Audit and Risk Committee is currently being considered. An individual with marketing experience has recently been recruited. The skills matrix for the Board will be further developed. A Cyber Security Posture Session with JISC will be explored as part of the Board of Management Training and Development Session for Academic Year 2025/26.	**Action by:** Secretary to the Board of Management **Timescale:** 31 December 2025

Observation	Recommendation
The work undertaken by College management to leverage Power BI was roundly welcomed by Board Members. As a natural progression from the work which has already been completed, the ability for Board Members to drill down into the data was raised as a potential improvement action, particularly for members of the Finance and Resources Committee or the Learning and Teaching Committee.	**R2** An exercise should be undertaken to examine the viability and benefits of providing Board Member access to drill down into the data tables held in Power BI.
Management Comments	**Timescales and Responsible Person**
Recommendation accepted. Training has been provided to Board members. New joining members will also be provided with training required to enable them to use Power BI.	**Action by:** Director of Digital and Information Services **Timescale:** 31 October 2025

7. Improvement Action Plan (Continued)

Section C – Accountability

Observation	Recommendation
Although Board Members were complimentary regarding the effectiveness of the existing induction process in preparing them for their role on the Board of Management, two Board Members expressed the view that there would be merit in developing tailored induction for new members of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Finance and Resources Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee to ensure that members of these committees can "hit the ground running" in contributing to the business of these sub-committees.	**R3** Consideration should be given to the development of tailored induction for new members of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Finance and Resources Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee, to ensure that new members of these sub-committees have a deeper understanding on the core business for each of these sub-committees from the outset.
Management Comments	**Timescales and Responsible Person**
Recommendation accepted. Board members are directed to CDN who provide specific information on key Board committees as well as relevant training. The College Induction process will be extended to cover the Standing Committees that members will be joining, and a meeting will be set up with the relevant Vice Principal. An overview of all committees is provided as part of the Board Induction with the Secretary to the Board of Management. New members of a Standing Committee being mentored by a long-standing member is also being considered.	**Action by:** Secretary to the Board of Management and the Director of Estates and Corporate Services **Timescale:** 30 September 2025

Observation	Recommendation
The College's Assurance Framework and the supporting Assurance Map is already reported to the Audit and Risk Committee each September, and is communicated via the minute to the Board of Management, but two Board Members highlighted the challenge of identifying the key information which the Board requires assurance on. Therefore, it was suggested that a session at a Board Strategy Day, with a specific focus on assurance mapping, would be beneficial for Board Members in terms of understanding the key assurances they need to discharge their responsibilities, and provide increased clarity regarding where this assurance will come from.	**R4** Consideration should be given to the development and delivery of a session at a Board Strategy Day, with a specific focus on assurance mapping.
Management Comments	**Timescales and Responsible Person**
Recommendation accepted. A Strategy Day is currently being organised. A further session on the Assurance Mapping will be organised.	**Action by:** Principal and Vice Principals **Timescale:** 30 September 2025

7. Improvement Action Plan (Continued)

Section E – Relationships and Collaboration

Observation	Recommendation
Although Board Members were satisfied with the level of reporting on partnership activity, the possibility of arranging a stakeholder event to discuss shared priorities was raised by two Board Members.	**R5** Consideration should be given to arranging a stakeholder event, which would provide the Board of Management with an opportunity to discuss shared priorities with key stakeholders to inform future planning.
Management Comments	**Timescales and Responsible Person**
Recommendation accepted. A Strategy Day is currently being organised and a separate stakeholder event is being planned also to be held following a refresh of the College Strategic Plan.	**Action by:** Principal and Vice Principals **Timescale:** 30 November 2025

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