

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	4 October 2023
Paper No.	BoM1-I
Agenda Item	6.5
Subject of Paper	Board Self-Evaluation Report 2022-23
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Drew McGowan College Secretary
Date of production	21 August 2023
Action	For Discussion and Decision

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To discuss the findings of the recent Board self-evaluation and, subject to feedback, approve the report.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To share the outcome of the Board of Management's most recent annual self-evaluation. This exercise is a requirement of the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges and is used for members to reflect on Board's effectiveness. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the Board's strengths and areas that require development. The insights gathered from this exercise, along with others, inform the ongoing work of the Board and the Board Development Plan.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. All members of the Board were invited to complete the self-evaluation in June 2023. The response rate was 100%. Members of the Conveners' Committee discussed the results and approved the draft report for tabling at the Board for final approval.

4. Key Insights

- 4.1. Through the most recent self-evaluation, set against high standards, members have recorded high levels of satisfaction across the 34 measures and 5 categories. However, while 13 and 15 measures are rated green and amber respectively, 6 measures are categorised as red. This is an increase of 2 on the previous year.
- 4.2. The results of the self-evaluation indicate that members understand their roles and responsibilities and regard the Board and its committees as effectively discharging their duties. Members also indicate that the Board has clearly articulated the strategic direction and priorities for the College and continues to have due regard for the student experience in the College and on the Board.
- 4.3. Members recorded high levels of agreement that the Board is well-supported and advised in governance matters and that sufficient training and development opportunities are facilitated to support them in their roles. Satisfaction levels concerning stakeholder engagement and collaboration have also significantly improved on the previous year, which may be reflective of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ending of lockdown measures.
- 4.4. Members have also identified a number of areas that the Board should address and improve upon. Broadly, covered in paragraphs 15 – 23, these relate to monitoring progress against the Strategic Plan and Regional Outcome Agreement, discussions and decision-making at the Board, awareness of committee business, and Board members' skills and teamworking.
- 4.5. The self-evaluation methodology and reporting have been changed this year. The aim of these changes, described in paragraphs 4 – 7, is to streamline the process, increase accessibility, improve presentation and enhance comprehension. On further reflection, it is considered that the comments section is too general and open-ended. To address this, the comments section will be split into two questions: "what worked well?" and "what could be improved?". Feedback from Board members is welcome.

5. Impact and Implications

- 5.1. Having a robust self-evaluation process in place offers assurance to the College's stakeholders, including the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board, that the Board is committed to the highest standards of governance and remains committed to continuous improvement.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Board of Management Self-Evaluation Report 2022-23

Board of Management Self-Evaluation 2022-23

Introduction

1. The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges outlines the highest standards of governance and propriety that are expected of boards in the college sector and the individuals who serve on them. The Code requires the Board of Management to "keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process".
2. Members of the Board are invited to confidentially complete a self-evaluation questionnaire each year by expressing a level of agreement to a series of statements structured around the key principles of the Code:
 - Leadership and Strategy
 - Quality of the Student Experience
 - Accountability
 - Effectiveness
 - Relationships and Collaboration
3. Board members' responses to these statements, along with any comments provided, help identify areas of good governance and strengths of the Board, as well as areas for development. Self-evaluation is one aspect of monitoring Board effectiveness and supporting continuous improvement, with external evaluation and member annual reviews also playing a key role. The feedback gathered from these regular exercises informs the ongoing work of the Board and the Board Development Plan.
4. The methodology of the self-evaluation and the reporting of the results have been changed this year. The aim of these changes, described below, is to streamline the process, increase accessibility, improve presentation and enhance comprehension.
5. A five-point Likert scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" has replaced the previous six-option ranking of "low/disagree" to "high/agree". Results and scores are now expressed as percentages rather than averages and are shown in a stacked bar graph. While the questionnaire itself remained unchanged, the format was changed from a Word document to an online Forms survey.
6. Scores are determined by amalgamating the "strongly agree" and "agree" responses to each statement, producing a cumulative positive response rate. "Undecided/neutral" responses are not stripped out of the scores. While respondents are not disagreeing, selecting this option may identify emerging issues, such as around awareness and understanding, in particular areas that the Board should consider and address.
7. Based on these scores, statements are provided with a RAG rating with the following thresholds: ● 85 – 100%; ● 70 – 84%; ● <70%. The self-evaluation report will also now provide a year-on-year comparison. A retrospective analysis of the 2021-22 results using the new methodology was undertaken to provide a comparison to this year.
8. Board members were invited to complete the 2022-23 self-evaluation from 30 May 2023 to 16 June 2023. The completion rate was 100% for 2022-23, compared to 61% in 2021-22.
9. Overall, set against high standards, the results of the self-evaluation for 2022-23 show high levels of satisfaction across the 34 measures and 5 categories. Through their responses, members have affirmed that they have a clear grasp of their roles and responsibilities and recognise that the Board and its committees effectively discharge their duties.

10. The results also demonstrate members are confident that the Board has clearly articulated the College’s strategic direction and that the student experience remains a priority on the Board and in the College. Members are satisfied with the advice and support they receive in regard to governance, as well as the training and development opportunities that are facilitated. Compared to the previous year, there has been a significant increase in members’ satisfaction with stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

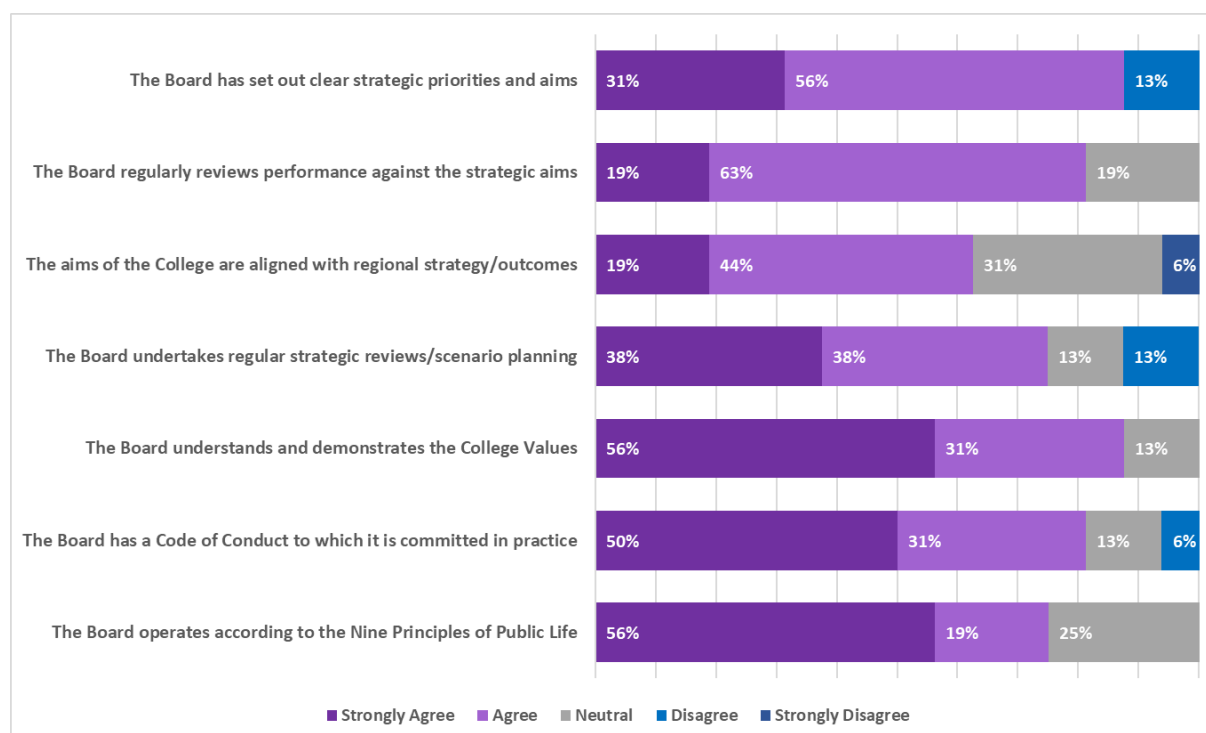
Section	2021-22			2022-23		
	Green	Amber	Red	Green	Amber	Red
Leadership & Strategy	3	4	0	2	4	1
Quality of Student Experience	2	3	1	3	3	0
Accountability	6	4	0	4	4	2
Effectiveness	2	3	2	4	1	2
Relationships & Collaboration	0	3	1	0	3	1
Total	13	17	4	13	15	6

11. The annual self-evaluation exercise has also identified areas that the Board should remain aware of and focus its attention on for further development and improvement. These areas include reporting progress against the Strategic Plan and Regional Outcome Agreement, Board discussion and decision-making, awareness of committee business and members’ skills and teamworking.

Leadership and Strategy

Statement	2021-22	2022-23
The Board has set out clear strategic priorities and aims	90%	88%
The Board regularly reviews performance against the strategic aims	91%	81%
The aims of the College are aligned with regional strategy/outcomes	82%	63%
The Board undertakes regular strategic reviews/scenario planning	82%	75%
The Board understands and demonstrates the College Values	82%	88%
The Board has a Code of Conduct to which it is committed in practice	100%	81%
The Board operates according to the Nine Principles of Public Life	82%	75%

● 85–100% ● 70–84% ● <70%



Comments

“We are currently re-structuring the college because of financial pressures. One problem we face is that the government’s priorities for the college sector (types/levels of provision) are unclear and we are left flying blind in terms of meeting wider priorities because these have not been clearly specified.”

“Where I am neutral is not to suggest that the Board doesn’t abide by the relevant policies but it is not an area I have examined in any detail over the past year.”

“The College has a clear strategy which the Board sign off but with little active engagement in the process of its development.”

“Regional collaboration seems not to be a priority for COGC. In fact, GCRB is often criticised. Strategic Review and Planning seems to be done by the college Executive, rather than by the Board. It often seems like the direction of travel is presented to the Board as “a fait accompli”. Are the Chair and the Principal too closely aligned? Is the Board ever truly challenging to the Exec?”

“We are, as a Board, mostly agreed that our planning days need to be more participative, produce clearer outcomes against which we can more specifically monitor progress and contribute professional expertise.”

“I consider that this is a very collaborative Board and one that endeavours at all times to uphold good governance and engages where possible in terms of strategy and scenario planning.”

“The Board has a Code of Conduct my experience has been that this is not always adhered to in Board meetings.”

“Every effort is made to align the strategic vision and strategic priorities both of the Scottish Government and the Glasgow Regional Board. The Board strives to shear and demonstrate the nine Principals of Public Life and to live values set for the college.”

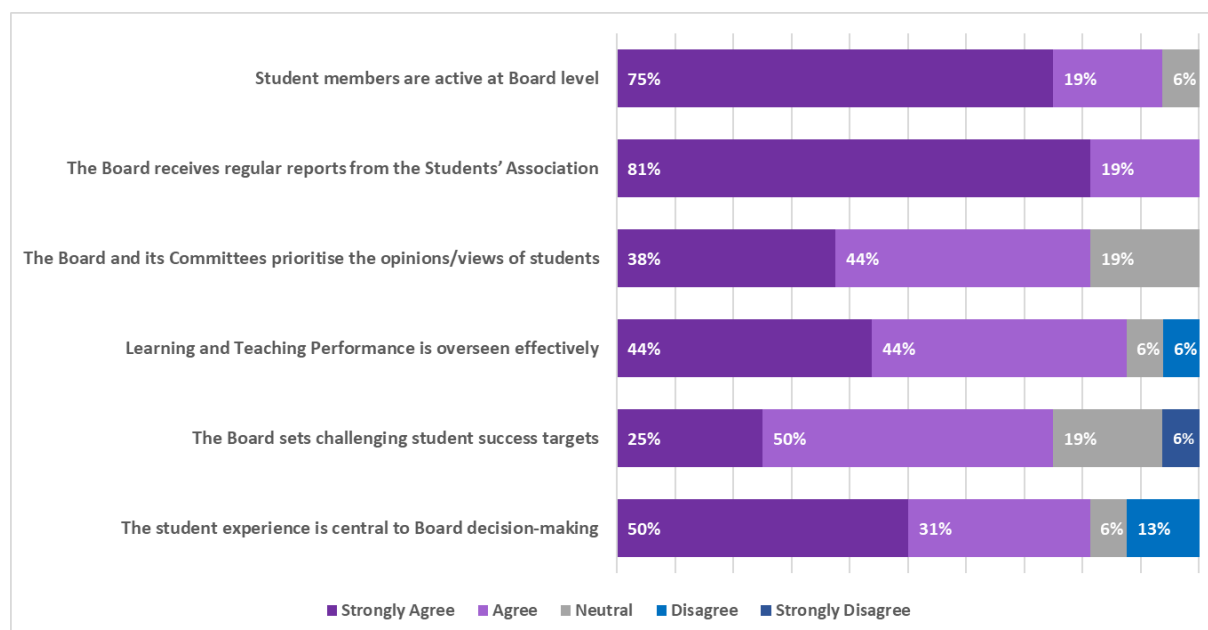
“The Board have taken steps through communications to highlight the nine principals of public life and code of conduct as an essential prompt and reminder of behaviours and approaches all members are to follow. The college has a clearly defined and shared Strategic Plan and set of values that are referred to in papers frequently. Our International aspects of operations and remit takes us beyond that which our regional peers deliver on to a similar scale and as such this could be held out beyond the base regional outcomes and aspirations in terms of geographic focus and influence.”

“The BoM demonstrated exemplary corporate leadership and resilience during the pandemic, always providing clear strategic direction and holding ELT/SMT appropriately to account for strategic delivery and effective and efficient operational management.”

Quality of the Student Experience

Statement	2021-22	2022-23
Student members are active at Board level	82%	94%
The Board receives regular reports from the Students' Association	100%	100%
The Board and its Committees prioritise the opinions/views of students	64%	81%
Learning and Teaching Performance is overseen effectively	82%	88%
The Board sets challenging student success targets	91%	75%
The student experience is central to Board decision-making	73%	81%

● 85–100% ● 70–84% ● <70%



Comments

"The drop-in student success outcomes is a significant issue but is considered in strategy discussions."

"Student representatives are treated (rightly) as equal partners and not only listened to but heard. they also seem well supported by college staff to undertake their representational roles effectively."

"The quality of the online/remote/blended learning offering is not scrutinised enough. I don't remember once the Board setting a student success target."

"The students are very much to the fore in the thinking of the Board and when and where possible are included in Board discussion and participation."

"During AY 22/23 there were significant operational changes that impacted on teaching and learning. It is not clear to what extent the impact(s) of these changes were discussed, assessed or measured in terms of Learning and Teaching Performance and it is therefore difficult to answer the question on oversight."

"The Board's priority focus is on the student and the student journey, this is closely overseen by members of the Learning and Teaching Committee and active representation by Board colleagues drawn from the COGC Student Association."

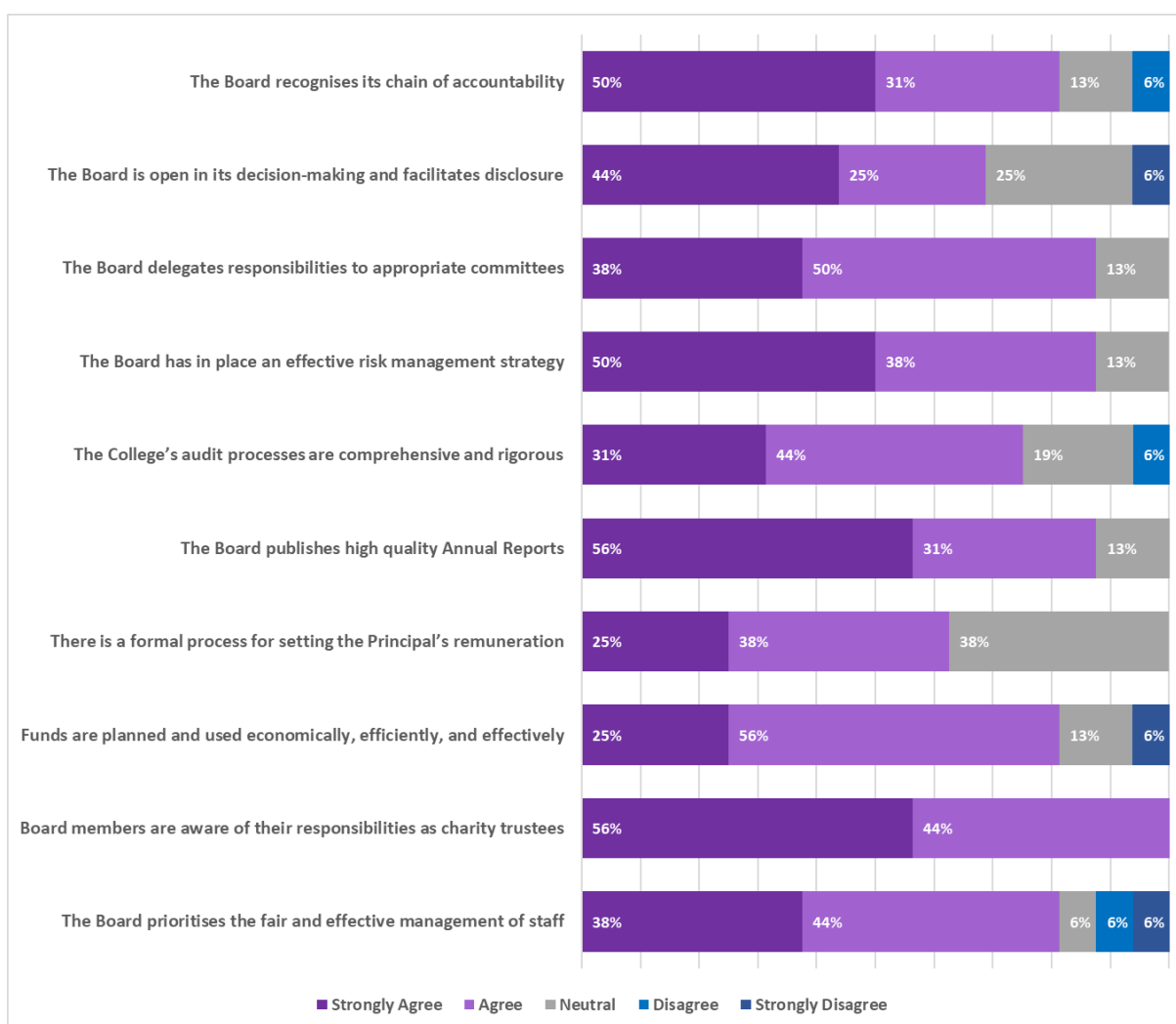
"We have always maintained a learner at the centre priority in decision making."

"The Board greatly values, listens to and encourages the voice of our College's student cohort as championed by our award-winning Student President and SA team both at the main Board and at its sub-committees."

Accountability

Statement	2021-22	2022-23
The Board recognises its chain of accountability	91%	81%
The Board is open in its decision-making and facilitates disclosure	82%	69%
The Board delegates responsibilities to appropriate committees	91%	88%
The Board has in place an effective risk management strategy	100%	88%
The College's audit processes are comprehensive and rigorous	91%	75%
The Board publishes high quality Annual Reports	100%	88%
There is a formal process for setting the Principal's remuneration	73%	63%
Funds are planned and used economically, efficiently, and effectively	82%	81%
Board members are aware of their responsibilities as charity trustees	91%	100%
The Board prioritises the fair and effective management of staff	82%	81%

● 85–100% ● 70–84% ● <70%



Comments

“Risk management in the current environment is challenging, and however hard things have been this year, we have another two years (at least) of constrained funding to face. It remains to be seen what impact(s) current changes in staffing will have on the student experience and staff morale, but there are few other options than carry on with what we have embarked upon.”

“There is a huge Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and expanding Exec team. Of the 20-strong membership of the SLT, only four, five at most, leaders have Student Experience at the core of their remit. The Board seems never to comment on these power dynamics.”

“The Board have to reflect on matters of training and responsibilities regularly. In addition it does recognise the SLT structure and all that goes with that.”

“The Board should provide more scrutiny of financial planning and spending priorities. As the employer the Board should prioritise the fair and effective management of staff but my experience is that the College fails to adhere to the principles of Fair Work and staff therefore lack effective voice. The Board should ensure that the College adopts and demonstrates the principles of the Fair Work framework.”

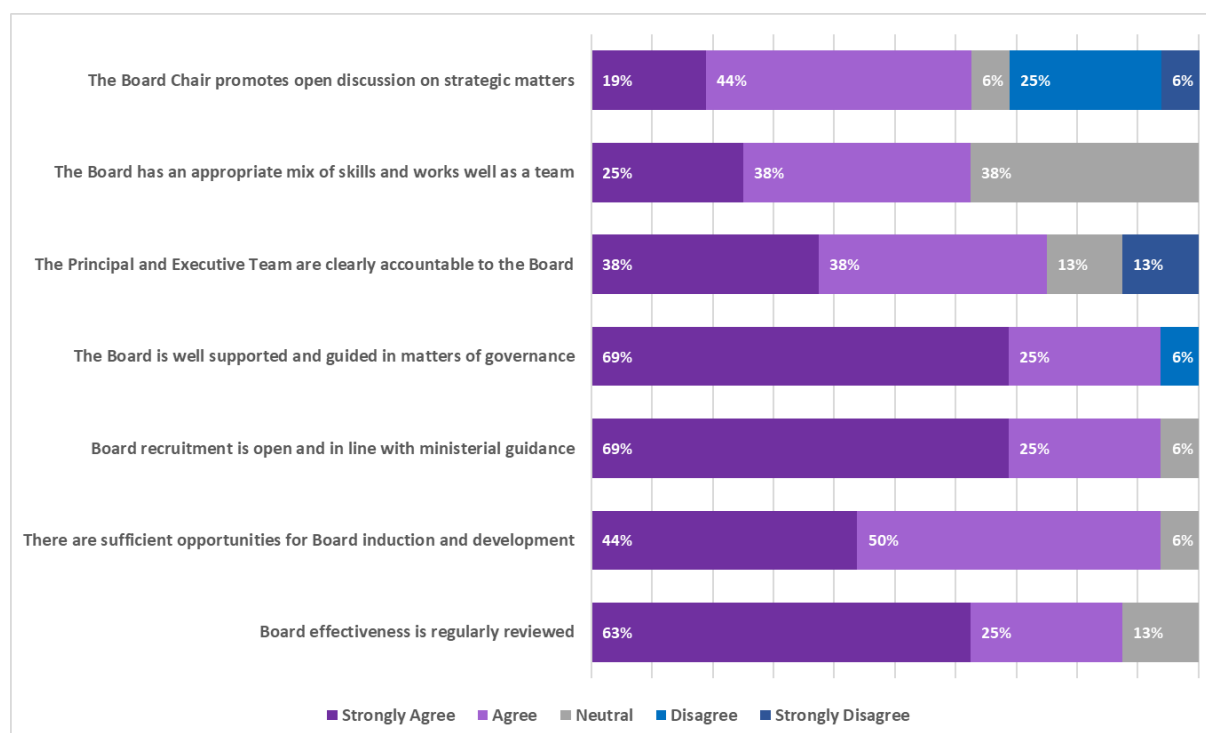
“The Board is a mature high operating Board the members of which are supremely aware of their responsibilities as members of the Board and trustees of the College as a charity.”

“I would note that Board members are acutely aware of their governance role and responsibilities which are not taken lightly. There are some challenging issues being faced by the College around finance, funding and industrial relations whilst maintaining and continually improving the student experience and staff satisfaction.”

Effectiveness

Statement	2021-22	2022-23
The Board Chair promotes open discussion on strategic matters	55%	63%
The Board has an appropriate mix of skills and works well as a team	55%	63%
The Principal/Executive Team are clearly accountable to the Board	82%	75%
The Board is well supported and guided in matters of governance	73%	94%
Board recruitment is open and in line with ministerial guidance	91%	94%
There are sufficient opportunities for Board induction and development	73%	94%
Board effectiveness is regularly reviewed	91%	88%

● 85–100% ● 70–84% ● <70%



Comments

“There has been a notable change in tone at the Board recently with a greater degree of disagreement emerging from one source.”

“The Board Chair does not prevent open discussion on strategic matters but nor do they promote it and, on occasion, it feels like discussion is discouraged.”

“The Board have to be more mindful as to gender and ability mix going forward.”

“The Chair and the Principal dominate discussions and steer decision making. There is an expectation that proposals and plans brought to the Board by ELT will be approved. It is unclear to what extent the Board is supported and guided in matters of governance as the principles of good governance are not always adhered to.”

“The members of the Board are committed to best practice in the recruitment and induction of those who join its membership and participate in its strategic and policy discussions deliberation and constructive challenge of policy, practice and procedures in respect of the operation of the college.”

“We are entering a time of flux with new members of the Board joining over summer and a number of existing members stepping down. It would be essential to ensure joining members inductions

are robust and the Board has opportunities to "gel". We have a strong Board and diversity of thoughts and backgrounds which will continue to be welcomed and valued."

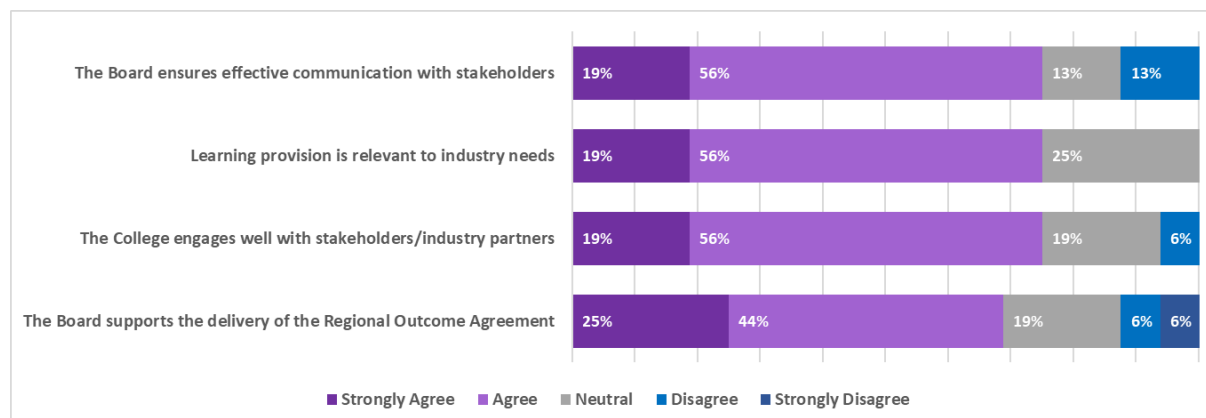
"I would have scored 11.2 [The Board has an appropriate mix of skills and works well as a team] as Strongly Agree as I think the Board had come together well with some particularly challenging decision making however the changes to the Board membership earlier this year has changed the dynamics with the airing of specific agendas rather than the greater good of the College."

"Excellent Chairing and governance support."

Relationships and Collaboration

Statement	2021-22	2022-23
The Board ensures effective communication with stakeholders	36%	75%
Learning provision is relevant to industry needs	46%	75%
The College engages well with stakeholders/industry partners	55%	75%
The Board supports the delivery of the Regional Outcome Agreement	91%	69%

● 85–100% ● 70–84% ● <70%



Comments

“The college is currently reviewing how we can work more closely with employers, which is a welcome development.”

“The review of industry relevance is underway. There is a view in industry that colleges are constrained by national funding models from reacting swiftly to market conditions and hopefully the review will confirm or reject that view.”

“No concerns about stakeholder engagement but the Board is not active in this space.”

“The Board seems not to be involved in these issues. Perhaps they have been deemed ‘operational’ and thus delegated fully to Exec...”

“The College is well placed and known for its role and engages well with a wide variety of organisations and groups.”

“As part of the Regional Outcome Agreement, the Board should ensure transparency and clear accountability for public funding.”

“Board actively communicates wherever possible.”

“Excellent and highly effective Board dynamics until recently.”

Conclusion

12. As the Board continuously pursues excellence and adherence to the highest standards of governance, the annual self-evaluation serves as an invaluable mechanism and opportunity for reflection and improvement. The findings of the self-evaluation provide members with a comprehensive overview of the Board's strengths and areas that require development. As stated at the outset, the insights gathered from these regular exercises inform the ongoing work of the Board and the Board Development Plan.
13. Overall, the self-evaluation for 2022-23 records generally high levels of satisfaction across the 34 measures and 5 categories. The results suggest that members understand their roles and responsibilities and regard the Board and its committees as effectively discharging their duties. Members also indicate that the Board has clearly articulated the strategic direction and priorities for the College and continues to have due regard for the student experience in the College and on the Board.
14. Members also recorded high levels of agreement that the Board is well-supported and advised in governance matters and that sufficient training and development opportunities are facilitated to support them in their roles. Satisfaction levels concerning stakeholder engagement and collaboration have also significantly improved on the previous year, which may be reflective of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ending of lockdown measures.

Highest Scoring Statements	Score	Lowest Scoring Statements	Score
The Board receives regular reports from the Students' Association	100%	There is a formal process for setting the Principal's remuneration	63%
Board members are aware of their responsibilities as charity trustees	100%	The Board has an appropriate mix of skills and works well as a team	63%
Student members are active at Board level	94%	The aims of the College are aligned with regional strategy/outcomes	63%
The Board is well supported and guided in matters of governance	94%	The Board Chair promotes open discussion on strategic matters	63%
Board recruitment is open and in line with ministerial guidance	94%	The Board is open in its decision-making and facilitates disclosure	69%
There are sufficient opportunities for Board induction and development	94%	The Board supports the delivery of the Regional Outcome Agreement	69%
Learning and Teaching Performance is overseen effectively	88%	The Board undertakes regular strategic reviews/scenario planning	75%
The Board has set out clear strategic priorities and aims	88%	The Board sets challenging student success targets	75%
The Board understands and demonstrates the College Values	88%	The Principal and Executive Team are clearly accountable to the Board	75%
The Board publishes high quality Annual Reports	88%	The Board operates according to the Nine Principles of Public Life	75%

15. Through the self-evaluation exercise, members have also identified a number of areas that the Board should address and improve upon. Broadly, these relate to discussions and decision-making at the Board, awareness of committee business, and Board members' skills and teamworking.
16. Members agree that the Board has established clear strategic priorities for the College but they have identified the reporting and review of progress against the Strategic Plan and ROA as an area for improvement. This will be reflected in the planning of the Board's business, such as the Balanced Scorecard and ROA evaluation, as well as the annual Strategic Planning Day.

17. While no members disagreed that the Board has an appropriate mix of skills and works well as a team, more than one-third selected the “neutral/undecided” option which categorises this area as red. With a number of long-standing members recently stepping down from the Board, and several new members joining, this is an area that the Board should be conscious of. This emphasises the importance of the effective induction and welcome of new members, annual sessions on strategic planning and Board development, and events in the College calendar. These opportunities to get to know one another and build relationships are, of course, over and above meetings of the Board and its committees.
18. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the Board to ensure that its membership has an appropriate mix of skills. The Skills and Experience Matrix, developed and tabled at the Board in the last academic year, can be used to understand the skills and expertise currently around the Board table. This is in addition to its principal purpose to inform the Board’s recruitment and succession planning.
19. Measures concerning open discussion and decision-making, and the facilitation of disclosure, are also rated as red in this self-evaluation. The outcome of these measures serves as a reminder that it remains imperative to continuously and consciously encourage all Board members to contribute to discussions and decision-making during meetings.
20. Board and committee decisions are recorded in their respective minutes which are regularly published on the College’s website. It is important to note that the presumption is in favour of disclosing Board papers for publication unless there is a reason for non-disclosure. These reasons include confidentiality, financial/commercial sensitivity and that a paper or report is currently in draft form but due to be published. Each Board and committee agenda have an item on “disclosability of papers” which allows members to consider whether the status of a paper should be changed.
21. The results of two particular measures, the Principal’s remuneration and the College’s audit processes, suggest that there is an issue of awareness for some members regarding the business considered by committees. With the explanation below in mind, it is important to note that committee minutes are tabled at each quarterly meeting of the Board for information of members. The outcome of these measures in this self-evaluation may indicate that it would be welcome for committee conveners to draw out key highlights for the benefit of the Board when considering the committee minutes.
22. Following an annual appraisal of the Principal by the Chair, the Remuneration Committee (now the Conveners’ Committee) discusses performance and decides on changes to remuneration, if any. The College’s regular programme of internal and external audit work and any recommendations are considered by the Audit & Assurance Committee throughout the year. Members of the Audit & Assurance Committee have repeatedly welcomed the comprehensive and high-quality reports they receive from the College’s internal and external auditors.
23. Finally, while all members agreed that they were aware of their responsibilities as charity trustees, measures on the Code of Conduct and Nine Principles of Public Life were rated as amber this year. The College Secretary has arranged for the Standards Commission to deliver a session on the Code of Conduct early in the academic year. This should serve as a good introduction to new members and a refresher for longer serving members of the Board.