Board of Management

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 19 June 2024
Paper No.	BoM5-C
Agenda Item	3.3
Subject of Paper	External Effectiveness Review Report 2023-24
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Drew McGowan Associate Director of Governance and Risk
Date of production	4 June 2024
Action	For Discussion and Decision

1.   Recommendations

1.1.   To review and approve the External Effectiveness Review 2023-24 Report for publication.

2.   Purpose

2.1.   To apprise the Board of the outcome of the recent External Effectiveness Review (EER) and seek approval for publication.

3.   Consultation

3.1.   C Munro requested feedback on the draft report from the Associate Director of Governance & Risk and the Conveners' Committee ahead of the final report being tabled for final approval by the Board in June.

4.   Key Insights

4.1.   The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges requires the Board to keep its effectiveness under review – consisting of a robust annual self-evaluation process and an externally-facilitated review every 3 – 5 years.

4.2.   C Munro, Governance Associate at the College Development Network, was commissioned to undertake the Board's new EER. This has involved a desk-based review of documentation, a Board survey and interviews with the Principal, Chair, Associate Director of Governance and Risk and Board members. Meetings of the Board and the People & Culture Committee have been observed, and a workshop was delivered at the Board Development Day, as part of the EER.

4.3.   The report recognises "the high level of good governance demonstrated by the City of Glasgow College Board of Management" and outlines several recommendations that are "relatively minor but… have the potential to have a positive impact." Recommendations from the EER will be included in the Board Development Plan for 2024-25, which will be tabled for the Board's review and approval at the first meeting in the new academic year, with progress reported to the Conveners' Committee and the Board.

4.4.   Once approved, the EER report will be published on the College's website and shared with the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board (GCRB).

5.   Impact and Implications

5.1.   Having a robust self-evaluation and externally-facilitated review process in place offers assurance to the College's stakeholders, including the GCRB and the Scottish Funding Council, that the Board is committed to the highest standards of governance and remains committed to continuous improvement.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Board External Effectiveness Review Report 2023-24

City of Glasgow College

Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review May 2024

FINAL Report 10 May 2024

Reviewer: Candy Munro
CDN Governance Associate
candy.munro@btinternet.com
www.cdn.ac.uk

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (the Code) sets out the principles of good governance for colleges in Scotland. This review is against the 2022 edition of the Code.

All colleges that receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council or a regional strategic body must comply with the Code as a condition of grant. Each board must state its adoption of the Code in its corporate governance statement contained within its annual financial statement.

The five principles set out in the Code provide a framework within which colleges are expected to develop their own policies and procedures.

The Code states that the college board must have in place a robust self-evaluation process. Para D.24 states

> *'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 at least every three years.'*

'The Guide for Board Members in the College Sector' and the 'Board Development Framework' provide additional guidance for college board members and college Governance Professionals.

Methodology

This external effectiveness review included several stages aimed at building up an overview of the board's effectiveness. The components of the review process were:
- Initial meeting with the Chair, Principal and Governance Professional to agree the scope of the review and the overall project plan
- Observation of the People and Culture Committee 13 February 2024
- Observation of the Board meeting 27th March 2024 (by Ron Hill)
- Desk review of core governance documentation, including agendas reports and minutes.
- Interviews with the
  - Chair
  - Vice Chair
  - Principal
  - Convenor of the Audit and Risk Committee
  - Convenor of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee
  - Student Member
  - Staff Member
  - Governance Professional

- Board survey to seek Members' views of governing processes
- Board workshop to review conclusions and recommendations 17 April 2024

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A highly effective and skilled Board which benefits from strong leadership and clearly determines the vision, strategic direction, and educational character for the college

This is a high performing Board with a breadth of different backgrounds and skills. There is a culture of respect and collaborative working which contributes to effective teamworking. All Board members receive induction training and clearly understand their role, duties, and responsibilities.

The quality of the student experience is genuinely at the core of Board discussions.

The Board is supported by a competent Governance Professional who provides valuable advice and guidance alongside the well-appreciated assistance of the PA to the Board. The Board receives regular governance updates.

The Board is in transition, going through a period of significant turnover. Nine new members joined over the last year and further new members are currently being recruited. The current Chair retires at the end of the academic session and a new Chair will be appointed. This transition needs careful planning and consideration given to how best to build the new Board 'team.'

This review presented an opportunity to measure the governance of the college against the examples of effective governing practice highlighted in the CDN Report, Overview of the External Governance Effectiveness Reviews for Scotland's Colleges 2020/21. In each of the fourteen areas highlighted in the report CoGC governance arrangements measured up well.

3 EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW AGAINST THE CODE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

3.1 Leadership and Strategy

This is an effective board which is strategic, cohesive, and engaged. The board benefits from leadership from a skilled and experienced Chair, who has established a learner centred culture based on teamwork, participation, and openness.

Decisions are taken in the spirit of collective responsibility and are summed up by the Chair. An action tracker, which forms part of the minutes, allows the Board to monitor progress against actions agreed.

Board members clearly understand their role, duties, and responsibilities.

The Board has demonstrated great resilience having faced a number of challenges over the last year. The Board response has been professional and robust based on strong leadership, effective communications, and sound advice from the Governance Professional.

This is a forward-looking Board, planning ahead for tomorrow's challenges. The Strategic Planning Day held in November 2023 included scenario planning in the key areas of finance, learning, teaching and student experience, people and corporate support, operations and corporate development and innovation.

The Strategic Plan 2021-2030 is underpinned by an annual planning cycle.

Performance

The Code states under Performance, A9
> *'The board must ensure that a comprehensive performance measurement system is in place which is clearly linked to the regional strategic framework and identifies key performance indicators.'*

There is effective monitoring of KPIs at Committee level and the Board receives an Annual College Performance Report, the last one was reported to the Board at the December 2023 Board meeting. However, a quarterly 'Strategic Business Report' report to each Board meeting would allow the Board to monitor performance and progress against strategic objectives on a more regular basis.

3.2 Quality of the Student Experience

The quality of the student experience is clearly central to decision making, and the Student Association update is high on the Board agenda. The Student Association report provides a valuable overview of student engagement however the report would benefit from some narrative around the anticipated impact of activity.

There was a risk that the student experience may have been overshadowed by the pressing issues of redundancies, financial pressures, and industrial action but the Board have maintained a clear focus on 'students at the centre' which is expressed openly at meetings.

The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee provides oversight of the curriculum, teaching, and student experience across the College, providing assurance to the Board. The Committee is effectively supported by the Vice Principal Student Experience. Committee papers are of a high quality and useful survey data is used to underpin evidence-based decision making.

The Board is confident that structures are in place to provide a quality student experience.

3.3 Board Accountability

Decision-making processes are transparent, properly informed, rigorous, and timely. Board papers are high quality, providing professional analysis and insight to support effective decision making.

The Board provides an appropriate level of support, challenge, and scrutiny to the executive team.

Board Committees support the work of the Board and provide an effective level of oversight and scrutiny, there is an appropriate level of trust in the work of the committees.

There are six sub committees, each committee has a Terms of Reference which is reviewed annually, a schedule of business for the academic year and provides an annual report to the Board.

The Audit and Assurance Committee reviews the effectiveness of the College's governance arrangements, financial systems, internal controls, and risk management, and provides assurance to the Board.

There is a robust approach to risk management, and strategic risk is discussed at committee and Board level.

3.4 Board Effectiveness

The Board has effective arrangements in place to ensure compliance with the Code of Good Governance. The remit for the Convenors Committee includes

> *2.1. Ensure the Board of Management's governance structure and arrangement remain fit for purpose, continue to satisfy the Code of Good Governance principles for Scotland's Colleges, and advise the Board as appropriate.*

The Chair provides effective leadership of the Board,

- promoting a culture of openness and encouraging effective team working,
- encouraging contributions from all members,
- ensuring there is an appropriate balance of constructive challenge and support to the Principal and the executive team.

The triangular relationship between the Chair, Principal and Governance Professional is constructive and effective.

The Principal supports good governance through effective communications between the Board and the rest of the college including staff and students.

The Governance Professional, with the support of the PA to the Board, provides valuable guidance and advice, effectively supporting good governance. The Board receives quarterly Governance Reports.

Board members are skilled and experienced individuals drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds. Staff and student members contribution is valued, providing essential skills knowledge and experience.

Recruitment of new members aims to fill identified skills gaps in membership.

Induction training for new members has been revised and all members are encouraged to undertake ongoing training and development in order to effectively fulfil their role.

There is a robust self-evaluation process in place. The Board Development Plan 2023/24 is structured around the five principles in the Code.

The College has welcomed nine new members over the last year and is currently recruiting three new members. Also, a new Chair will be in place for the new academic session. This, along with two new student members, represents a major turnover in Board membership. This transition needs careful planning and building of the new Board 'team.'

3.5 Relationships and Collaboration

There is a 'Stakeholder Engagement Plan' in place, and the Board has also considered the College's wider influence and the role that College staff, and their networks, play.

The Board is tasked with working in partnership to secure the coherent provision of high quality further and higher education in their area. Strategic planning is evidence based with an understanding of current and future labour market demands and skills requirements.

4   RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the high level of good governance demonstrated by the City of Glasgow College Board of Management the recommendations here are relatively minor but when implemented they have the potential to have a positive impact.

1	**Board Agendas and Papers** • Ongoing scenario planning to support the long-term vision for the college, building on the November 2023 Strategic Planning Event • More time for deep dives into specific issues • Brief written reports from the Chair and the Principal to each Board meeting • In addition to committee minutes, introduce a brief summary of key issues from each committee for Board attention. These could be agreed by committee members at the end of each meeting and recorded by the Governance Professional
2	**KPIs** • There is effective monitoring of KPIs at Committee level and the Board receives an Annual Performance Report. • A quarterly 'Business Report' report to the Board would allow the Board to monitor performance and progress against strategic objectives
3	**Student Experience** • The Chair should consider reinstating 'pre meetings' with student members to review the Board agenda and any items of specific relevance to the student experience • Student completion rates and factors impacting on student retention should be fully understood and monitored at a strategic level • The Student Association Update would benefit from some narrative around the anticipated impact of activity. • Members, and especially new members, to be encouraged to attend student events, graduations etc
4	**Communications** • Consider how the Board will ensure that communications continue to be open and transparent
5	**Transition to the 'New' Board** • The transition needs careful planning • Opportunity for group induction training • Keep building the Board 'team'

5   ANNEX 1

5.1 Document Review

1.   College Strategic Plan 2021-2030
2.   Committee terms of reference
3.   Annual Report and Accounts 2022.23
4.   Board papers 17 March 2024 & 14 December 2023
5.   People and Culture papers 13 February 2024
6.   Audit and Assurance Committee papers 14 March 2024
7.   Board Reference Papers
8.   External Effectiveness Review 2021
9.   Board Self-Evaluation Report 2022.23
10.   Board Development Plan 2023.24
11.   Board of Management Skills and Experience Matrix

Footnote

The reviewer would like to thank the Board Chair, Principal, members, and the Governance Professional for their assistance and insight with this external effectiveness review.