

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 11 December 2024
Paper No.	BoM2-I
Agenda Item	4.3
Subject of Paper	Principal Report: December 2024
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Dr Paul Little CBE Principal and Chief Executive
Date of production	4 December 2024
Action	For Discussion

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To discuss the Principal's quarterly report to the Board of Management.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To update the Board of Management on the College's work and key matters of interest since the last meeting of the Board.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. In progressing the matters outlined in the report, colleagues in the College and across the sector, as well as regional, national and international partners, have been engaged.

4. Key Insights

- 4.1. The Principal is responsible for the operational management of the College, as outlined in the Scheme of Delegation, subject to the strategic and policy direction of the Board.

- 4.2. The Board has the responsibility of setting the strategic direction of the College. The College's [Strategic Plan 2021-30](#), refreshed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, outlines our commitment to Let Learning Flourish through the inspiration, excellence and innovation of our leading teaching methods and world-class facilities. Our eight strategic priorities, shown below, are mapped across four strategic themes:

- **Students**
Priorities 1 and 2
- **Growth and Development**
Priorities 3 and 4
- **People and Processes**
Priorities 5 and 6
- **Finance**
Priorities 7 and 8



- 4.3. Five supporting strategies – [Student Academic Experience](#), [People & Culture](#), [Corporate Development](#), [Digital](#) and [Sustainability](#) – have been developed to deliver on the Strategic Plan. Progress is measured and tracked through the College’s Balanced Scorecard.
- 4.4. By delivering on our strategic priorities, the College will facilitate opportunities for our students, support industry, build communities and, in so doing, affect positive change in people’s lives in and beyond the city whose name we are proud to bear.

5. Impact and Implications

- 5.1. The Principal’s report ensures that Board members remain informed of the work of the College, delivery of the Strategic Plan and key developments affecting the College and sector.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Principal’s Report

Principal's Report to the Board of Management: December 2024

Students

1. We celebrated our winter graduation with three ceremonies that provided the opportunity to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of our learning community: students, lecturers, support staff, and industry partners can all rightly reflect on another cohort of learners making their way into further learning and work.
2. The achievements, which saw standing room only at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall, as over a thousand graduates and their families marked the occasion. As has become the norm, we were also honoured to have three exceptional guest speakers, this year: Tommy Gormley, a renowned film director and producer; Chloe Oswald an alumna that City launched on a spectacular entrepreneurial career; and Sandy Begbie CBE, Chief Executive of Scottish Financial Enterprise. All spoke warmly of the College's success in supporting the Class of '25 to achieve their successful outcomes.
3. The ceremony also featured the bestowal of a Fellowship on Donal Burke, for his life-saving and award-winning research into oxygen depletion in enclosed spaces on board ships; A further presentation, to former Depute Principal Dr Sheila Lodge, came in the form of the Principal's Commendation.
4. I am particularly pleased that student retention figures for the 2024/25 academic year are showing significant improvement with early withdrawal rates falling to 2.3% from 3%, and further withdrawal rates down to 3.7% from 5.1%. These positive trends highlight our continued focus on supporting students to succeed. I continue championing a step change in attainment the year.
5. Our planning for the next academic year 2025/26 is well underway: our focus is gearing up for recruitment, with internal applications opening on 4 December, and external recruitment beginning on 15 January 2025: for the third year running, the College is targeting 158,000 credits.
6. Board members may recall from my report to the Board in October that Finley Graham, a former HND Computer Networking student, was awarded a Medallion for Excellence in IT Network Systems Administration at the World Skills Competition 2024 in Lyon, effectively placing him 4th in the world. Finley recently appeared at a WorldSkills event, and was recognised again for his achievement – hopefully, Cabinet Secretary Jenny Gilruth, with whom Finley was pictured, will have taken note of his recent success.

Growth & Development

7. The 2024/25 academic year has had a strong start in growth and development, with the College welcoming visiting staff and students from partner institutions in Ghana, Tanzania, Angola, and Saudi Arabia. Further groups from India and Oman are expected in the New Year.
8. Over the past decade, the College has actively pursued commercial and international opportunities, generating an average of £7 million annually in income from these activities, even during the Covid-19 years. This figure excludes income from areas such as the Halls of Residence, events and lets, or miscellaneous sources like catering, underscoring the College's sustained success in this area.
9. The Board will receive a presentation on the College's income diversification strategy, including the role of City of Glasgow International (CGI) Ltd, the College's wholly-owned

subsidiary. CGI focuses on providing commercial services in sectors such as education, training, retail, research, and consultancy, both nationally and internationally. This initiative aims to generate additional revenue, which can be reinvested into the College. While progress is regularly reported to the Development Committee, the presentation will offer the Board an opportunity to discuss CGI's plans and the importance of diversifying income streams for the College's future sustainability.

People & Processes

10. Our annual Strategic Planning Day was held on 8 November at the Riverside campus, and I want to thank Board members for their active engagement and valuable contributions throughout the event.
11. The day included five key sessions, covering topics such as the 2023-24 Level 1 Balanced Scorecard, which evaluates our operational performance against strategic priorities and is due for approval at the December Board meeting. We also discussed the College's strategic positioning, its role as a local anchor institution with global reach, and its contributions to economic development, including through the £1.13bn Glasgow City Region City Deal.
12. Further sessions focused on the links between education and health, highlighting our role in addressing social determinants of health and tackling inequalities. These discussions provided valuable insights into how we can deepen our impact as an institution. To build on the progress made during the day, I have scheduled a follow-up planning session with the Senior Management Team for 11 December. I look forward to updating members at the Board meeting later that day.
13. With support from the Director of Excellence I have conducted portfolio reviews of all faculties and directorates across the College, a process that allows for constructive challenge and continuous improvement. The College is also preparing for its first Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) in 2027/28, with the development of the first annual Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) ensuring progress in the meantime.

Finance

14. In further highly welcome news, I am delighted to report the College is now in a much healthier financial position than has been the case over the past two years. We have acted collectively, and with purpose, to take very challenging – and, at times, painful – decisions to restore our financial sustainability.
15. No one wanted to undertake the organisational change forced on us by external circumstances, but by acting decisively we have returned to a firm financial footing with a modest surplus of £130,000 recorded in our financial returns for 2023/24.
16. Thus, after two successive years of operating deficits, the College will report an operating surplus of £130,000 for the year ended 31 July 2024 thereby safeguarding our longer-term future. It is telling that several top universities are shedding posts.
17. At the time of writing, we await the Scottish Budget announcement by the Finance Secretary. However, we are increasingly less hopeful that all additional employer National Insurance contribution costs will be funded by the Scottish Government.

Strategic Positioning

18. This time of year is an intense period of stakeholder engagement, requiring me to be out almost every evening and travelling between London and Edinburgh. Nonetheless, mindful of the forthcoming opportunities inherent in, for example, Glasgow 850 and the Commonwealth Games, I have taken 1:1 meetings as follows:
- First Minister John Swinney.
 - Secretary of State for Scotland Ian Murray MP
 - Ellie Reeves, Minister without Portfolio and Chairperson for Labour
 - Minister for Higher & Further Education; and Minister for Veterans, Graeme Dey MSP
 - Minister for Fair Work, Tom Arthur
 - Douglas Ross MSP
 - Kaukab Stewart MSP
 - Cat Little, Chief Operating Officer of UK Civil Service
 - John Paul Marks, Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government
 - Continued rolling engagement programme with the new Glasgow City Region MPs, meeting Glasgow East MP John Grady (one of three MPs that represent the city centre) and Katrina Murray MP (representing Cumbernauld and Kilsyth). Further meetings are confirmed post-recess.
19. I also participated in a Cabinet Office strategic roundtable discussion on mission-based government (led by Ellie Reeves MP, Cabinet Office Minister without Portfolio) at the Cabinet Office's second headquarters in Glasgow. The session followed a preparatory meeting attended by the Director of Corporate Support.
20. I remain actively involved with the Glasgow City Centre Taskforce, contributing to efforts aimed at supporting the recovery of Glasgow's city centre and implementing positive initiatives to enhance its appeal to visitors.
21. In addition, I participate in the monthly Glasgow Business Growth Council and ensure the College plays an integral role in the Glasgow International Strategy. This includes supporting the City Council in developing a new International Strategy for Glasgow.

Forward Look

22. I warmly invite Board members to save these dates and join us for the upcoming events on the College calendar:
- **Learning & Teaching Conference:** 21 January 2025.
 - **Burns Supper:** 23 January 2025
 - **Maritime Security Conference:** March 2025, date to be confirmed.