

Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board

Glasgow Region Strategic Plan

Our Role and Purpose

The role of the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board is to secure the coherent provision of a high quality of fundable further and higher education in Glasgow's assigned colleges.

We plan, deliver and monitor a high-quality, sustainable, coordinated and coherent Glasgow college system which delivers life-changing, inspirational and aspirational education for students, their communities and employers in the city region.

Our purpose is to:

Safeguard and deliver a sustainable, ambitious college education system for Glasgow which delivers life-changing opportunities in the right place at the right level.

Position Statement:

The Glasgow college region has been under review as part of the Scottish Funding Council's Review of Tertiary Education in Scotland. As such, this strategic plan is written with a baseline assumption of change in the short-medium term, including change to GCRB as an organisation and Regional Strategic Body. A Ministerial decision on the future structure of the region is anticipated. This plan is intended to provide short-term direction of travel and prioritisation at a strategic level, and to direct the contents of the Outcome Agreement for Glasgow. It allows for a refreshed evaluation of risk, and is supported by an evolving delivery plan. It is intended to develop solid foundations for the future of the Glasgow college system.

Welcome

Glasgow's colleges, along with the rest of society, have been through a time of significant challenge and change, but remain a vital part of our social fabric, providing opportunities for life-changing learning, qualifications which open doors and build careers, and delivering a positive impact on the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of our communities, the region and nation.

The deep impact of Covid-19 has led to many changes, alongside a host of new and continuing challenges as we adapt to the impact of the financial challenges and uncertainty, structural change, impact on individuals' wellbeing, and the climate emergency.

But through all this, the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board, and the Glasgow college system as a whole, remains focused on outcomes for our students and their communities, intent on social and economic change, open to deep, meaningful collaboration with partners and stakeholders, linked to our wider region, connected to Glasgow's Just Transition framework, and ambitious for our college system as it evolves in a fast-changing and complex world.

Across the largest college system in Scotland, it is key that we continue to offer the right level of learning and training at the right time for each learner's needs, and in the right place, be that in our estate of college buildings, embedded in our communities, or online.

This Strategic Plan sets out a core set of priorities for the short term, while seeking to create fertile ground for the Glasgow college system to evolve, seeking long-term sustainability and the creation of a college system which is innovative and creative, ambitious, and forward-looking, connected, and agile to respond to the needs of individuals, communities, business, the region, and nation, now and in the future.

The Plan builds on the previous 2017-2022 Strategic Plan which created an effective regional approach, the work of our colleges, and the huge potential of our people, to provide a clear set of priorities as a longer-term vision for the region evolves. It seeks to find common ground and contribute to associated plans, policies, and strategies with a wide range of partners, including the Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council, local authorities, and partners across the education system and beyond, recognising and promoting our collective strength in championing a wider eco-system approach in all we do.

Through this conscious collaboration we can build a system which delivers deep, lasting change to the region's social and economic wellbeing.

Janie McCusker

Chair of the Regional Board

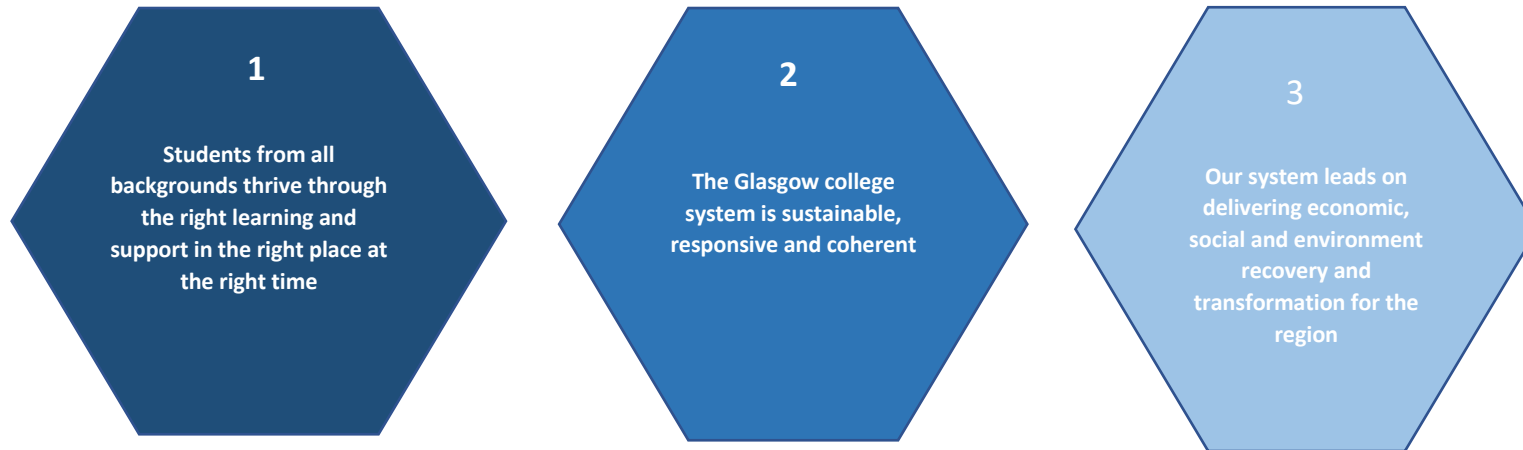
Martin Boyle

Executive Director

Our Regional Strategic Aims

- For **learners**, we ensure that they are at the centre of the system, with equality, fairness, lifetime access to learning, skills, qualifications, support, guidance and information to help find an efficient learner journey; with more right turns, effective progression, and appropriate progress. The Glasgow college system effectively supports those most in need. Learning is delivered in the right place at the right level.
- For **communities**, we ensure colleges at the heart of their communities, with effective local decision making, meeting the requirements of those most in need to access effective life-changing education opportunities. Colleges play a key role in strengthening communities and building partnerships that collectively address the challenges and opportunities for social and economic transformation.
- For **colleges**, as anchor institutions at the heart of the Glasgow eco-system, they are enabled to deliver outstanding learning, skills and qualifications at all relevant levels of the SCQF ladder which enhance Glasgow and Scotland's social and economic prosperity, across multiple modes and levels of study.
- For the **Glasgow college system**, clear and effective strategic structures, direction and relationships deliver enhanced pan-regional planning and collaboration through strategic, coherent, clear governance and management.
- For **Scotland's education system, learners, communities, employers, employees and colleges**, Glasgow's colleges are financially viable for the long term, including through efficiency gains to secure quality and public value. The Glasgow college system is affordable, efficient in operating at the right scale, and with others to minimise unnecessary duplication and competition, optimise digital technology, and tackle the climate crisis. The Glasgow college system plays an active role in working with partners to support social and economic recovery and development, playing an integral part alongside business and industry.

Our Strategic Goals



The Strategic Goals are intended to ensure the effective, clear and transparent prioritisation of activity within the Glasgow college system, mindful of regional and national strategies and interdependencies while focused on outcomes which safeguard our system, and maximise opportunities for partnership and positive impact on individual, community, social and economic outcomes.

Each Strategic Goal is linked to a set of Priorities which should be taken as the core intended outcomes of the Glasgow college system. These will form the core focus of annual Outcome Agreement activity in the first instance, while an annual Strategic Activity Plan will set out actions, aligned to funding to provide a set of outcomes for Strategy Trackers.

Context

This Plan is set within a wider context of significant challenge and change, but also significant opportunity for the Glasgow college region.

- **National review:** The Scottish Funding Council's national review of Scotland's tertiary system has significant implications for colleges as they seek to ensure long-term sustainability, effective funding, monitoring, and reporting models, as well as effective ways of working with education partners in the school and university systems, with the wider public sector, and with other key stakeholders in business and beyond. Reviews of Scotland's qualifications frameworks, skills delivery, and of its national organisations means this is a period of continued change.
- **Regional review:** The review of the Glasgow college system is anticipated to reach a conclusion during the timeframe of this Strategic Plan, potentially signalling further evolution of the system, and demanding a clear focus on the delivery of outcomes which benefit our students, their communities, and which enhance our ability to deliver positive social and economic change. The focus of this period must be on delivery of a clear, coordinated, and effective Glasgow college system which is able to make effective strategic decisions and delivers best value for public investment while delivering social and economic good, evolving to be sustainable in a markedly changed environment.
- **Changing student needs and digital change:** Our students will increasingly require to be equipped with the meta-skills to thrive, not just survive, in a complex and fast-changing world, where society and work have been transformed by the digital revolution, and where training for single career for life is increasingly rare. Our education and training offering will need to be agile, responsive and move at pace to provide lifelong learning, evolving skills, and the capacity to innovate and create. By doing so we can begin to address attainment, productivity, and access challenges.
- **A fairer, more inclusive and equitable economy and society:** Glasgow continues to have great disparity in outcomes and experiences across our communities and continues to have many of Scotland's most deprived neighbourhoods and significant inequality. Education can, and must, play a key role in offering life chances, creating opportunities and consciously transforming lives for the better. As part of a wellbeing-led society, this must be a heightened priority.
- **Financial uncertainty:** The current fiscal position and on-going reviews of spending at a national level, allied to new and historical financial challenges means that the whole system is in a challenging position. Against this, we must focus on creating the conditions for the Glasgow college system to survive, to establish a sustainable model, and to maximise opportunity.
- **National policy and priorities:** The Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, alongside the rest of the regional and national strategic and policy landscape, is an ambitious yet challenging set of aims, and it will be important that the region plays a key role. In particular, both national and regional economic transformation, the future skills agenda, Just Transition and climate change, and Scotland's Fair Work strategy require to be central to the region's overarching direction and approach.
- **UK and international trends, policies, and relationships:** A period of flux in policies, relationships and trends means that we require more effective data to be able to make clear and informed decisions, while retaining an eye to changes, influencing and leading wherever possible to secure outcomes which champion and benefit the Glasgow college system.

National Priority Focus Areas

The Scottish Government Purpose and Principles for post-school education, research and skills work nests within the National Performance Framework and National Strategy for Economic Transformation, and takes account of policies such as just transition, innovation and the wider reforms affecting skills delivery, qualifications, and schools. In addition to maintaining a focus on regionally developed priorities outlined in this plan, the following national strategic priorities and policy objectives inform our activity:

- To support the Scottish Government's stated ambitions of tackling poverty, building a prosperous economy, and achieving net zero by 2045.
- To secure coherent, quality tertiary education and skills provision that meets the needs of learners and employers, and contributes to economic and social objectives at regional, national and international levels.
- To promote fair access to, and successful pathways through, tertiary education; and to support students to be successful and to participate in their education.
- To sustain excellent discovery research, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and connected innovation that makes research useful and enhances entrepreneurial activity.
- To invest in important strategic infrastructure – estates, digital, knowledge exchange – for sector-wide benefit.
- To support the transition of the tertiary education, skills and research system towards greater financial sustainability and efficiency in the face of challenging pressures on public finances.

Strategic Goal 1

Students from all backgrounds thrive through the right learning and support in the right place at the right time

Priorities:

- Ensure that the Glasgow college curriculum supports every learner's journey
- Enhance connection to the wider education and business eco-system to maximise transition opportunities via employment or further study, and meet the skills needs of the city region and targeted specialist sectors
- Promote collaboration and effective transitions, and to remove inappropriate system competition
- Ensure that the Glasgow college system plays a key role in increasing opportunity and prosperity while reducing poverty and inequality
- Deliver a supportive, inclusive, fair and equitable college environment for all learners, including the provision of support which recognises the need for mental health and wellbeing care

Strategic Goal 2

The Glasgow college system is sustainable, responsive and coherent

Priorities:

- Safeguard the Glasgow college system by working towards a viable, sustainable and affordable model
- Ensure that targeted investment progresses the strategic aims of the region, while maximising opportunity and enhancing stability
- Maximise the use of the Glasgow college estate while planning for the future – across physical and digital infrastructure
- Enhance partnership working to maximise opportunities
- Manage the allocation of resources within the Glasgow college system to maximises delivery of strategic goals
- Develop effective monitoring of impact and performance to provide regional and national assurance, and to inform effective strategic choices

Strategic Goal 3

Our system leads on delivering economic, social and environment recovery and transformation for the region

Priorities:

- Improved connection between the Glasgow college system and wider education eco-system to enhance transition and partnership opportunities
- Improved connection between the Glasgow college system and wider political, civic and business eco-system to maximise partnership opportunities and ability to deliver positive impact
- Ensure alignment with strategic direction of regional and national partners to maximise opportunity to support the regional economy
- As trusted partners of choice, support development of opportunity and prosperity for the city region's citizens
- With a core focus on accessibility and equality, access to college education is open to all, and plays a key role in addressing the city region's challenges on poverty and inequality
- Support economic recovery centred on enhancing outcomes for our learners and their communities
- Support Glasgow's Just Transition ambitions
- Across the Glasgow college system and in collaboration with partners work to deliver the regional environment and sustainability strategy to contribute to Glasgow's net zero ambitions
- Enhance the role and activity of the Glasgow colleges as 'anchor institutions' via deep, sustainable and agile partnership activity