

## Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 29 April 2024
Paper Title	Board Self-Evaluation 2023-24
Agenda Item	15
Paper Number	BM3-I
Responsible Officer	Board Secretary
Recommended Status	Disclosable
Action	For Decision

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** To provide the Board with assurance on the evaluation process undertaken, initial feedback from its 2023-24 self-evaluation questionnaire, and next steps proposed by the Chair.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Board is invited to **approve** the report and **note** proposed next steps.

### **3. Background**

#### **3.1.** The Code of Good Governance requires that:

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

#### **3.2.** GCRB underwent an externally facilitated evaluation in 2021 and is required do so again in 2026. The report that follows outlines the self-evaluation activities undertaken during the course of the year, in accordance with procedures overseen by the Nominations & Remuneration Committee.

### **4. Self-Evaluation Report**

#### **4.1.** The following activities have been undertaken as part of the 2023-24 evaluation process.

- a) Annual individual self-evaluation meetings between all Members and the Board Chair took place in the early part of the calendar year, including consideration of development needs and setting objectives for the year ahead.
- b) At December, January and March meetings, respectively, the Performance & Resources, Audit & Assurance and Nominations & Remuneration Committees considered and approved reports on their membership, attendance and activity during the year, key decisions taken, and priorities for the year ahead. All reports have been submitted to the Board.
- c) All Committee members were also invited to provide feedback on the Committee Chair's performance. Any feedback received was shared with the Board Chair to inform one-to-one evaluation meetings.
- d) The Senior Independent Member undertook an evaluation of the Board Chair including a scaled questionnaire with space for qualitative feedback and held follow-up interviews with a sample of Board Members. A verbal report was provided to the Board at its January 2023 meeting and feedback will be shared with Scottish Government as the Chair's appointing body. GCRB's questionnaire incorporates Scottish Government appraisal criteria to ensure that feedback from Board Members is specifically aligned to those criteria.

#### **4.2.** A questionnaire relating to overall board effectiveness, based on principles in the Code of Good Governance was circulated to Members in March. A different format was adopted for the 2023-24 questionnaire, returning to a more detailed evaluation against principles set out in the Code of Good Governance, and testing a digital format via the BoardEffect platform. The rationale for returning to a more detailed questionnaire followed by a facilitated session was the recommendation from the last externally facilitated review to strengthen the Board's processes to provide assurance on compliance with the Code. GCRB had previously shifted its approach away from a lengthy questionnaire towards fewer questions focused on key governance areas and more scope for qualitative feedback in the form of comments, backed up with a high-level compliance review submitted annually to the Audit & Assurance Committee.

The digital format has not materially improved the response rate, which was ten out of a potential fifteen respondents, ie, 66% (last year's response rate was 61%). The new format and increase from 12 to 28 questions has, however, resulted in a (relatively) reduced number of comments. The majority of respondents limited their feedback to the scaled questionnaire. The Nominations & Remuneration Committee will have an opportunity to review the process again in the Autumn.

Overall, Board Members gave a very positive assessment of GCRB's compliance with the Code of Good Governance. Although a direct comparison with previous years is not possible, no respondent gave the Board a *poor* or *very poor* score for any statement. The vast majority of scores given (with reference to the attached summary report) were *good* or *very good*.

There were relatively few comments. One consistent theme emerging from the comments that were received was the importance of the relationship between the regional board and the assigned colleges and the need for co-operation and alignment of planning.

It had been agreed to use survey feedback as the basis for a facilitated discussion prior to the April Board meeting as the second stage of evaluation, however, the anticipated Ministerial announcement about future governance of the region has prompted a rethink of the timing of follow-up activity. The Chair has decided that a better way forward will be to hold a facilitated discussion about the Board's effectiveness around the end of the academic year once an announcement has been made, and in preparation for a strategy session in August at which the Board will consider future and transitional arrangements.

Drafting of the Board's 2024-25 development plan will be aligned to this process. The Development Plan was reduced in scope for 2023-24, in the context of the ongoing review of governance, to focus on ensuring key areas of induction and training continued to be progressed/monitored. The Nominations & Remuneration Committee has monitored progress against the plan throughout the year.

A summary report showing all responses to the evaluation survey and a summary chart showing progress against Development Plan actions are provided as appendices to this report.

## **5. Risk and Compliance Implications**

- 5.1. The report refers to compliance with evaluation requirements as set out in the Code of Good Governance.
- 5.2. The report contributes to mitigation of Risk 0012: The capacity and capability of the Board is inadequate and standards of governance fall below the level required, and Risk 0013: There is a breach of legislation/guidance/code of practice and this results in a failure of governance.
- 5.3. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **6. Finance and Resource Implications**

- 6.1. There are no direct financial or resource implications of this report.

**7. Equalities Implications**

**7.1.** No equalities implications have been identified in this report.

**8. Learner Implications**

**8.1.** This impact of the Board's activity on the student experience is considered in the report. As a general point, robust governance arrangements, to which the report contributes, are essential to the effective delivery of regional objectives.

## Development Plan 2023-24

Annual Summary Report April 2024

AIM 1 <sup>1</sup> : DEVELOP BOARD CAPACITY - SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND TEAMWORKING				
<b>Strategic Impact:</b> The Board's collective knowledge and skills, and the effectiveness of its collective decision-making, are critical to good governance and the delivery of the Board's strategic objectives.				
<b>Risk:</b> This aim mitigates, in particular, Risk 012: GCRB Board membership does not have the necessary capacity and capability to deliver our objectives; some actions mitigate Risk 013: There is a breach of legislation/guidance/code of practice and this results in a failure of governance.				
OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY		STRATEGY/RISK REFERENCE	PROGRESS REPORT <i>column updated for each N&amp;R Committee meeting</i>
a) Maintain development programme to support collective and individual priorities.	i	Develop annual training record to support monitoring and planning of individual and board training.	Risk 012	In place, to ensure individual training and development information is available annually prior to the Chair's one-to-one meetings with Board Members.
	ii	Ensure all incoming Members undergo in-house and CDN induction including committee-level induction/training and executive briefings.	Risks 012, 013	Completed for incoming Student Members in 2023. Arrangements in place for induction of new Non-Executive and Trade Union Members before April 2024 Board.
	iii	Arrange refresher training for all Board Members on Data Protection.	Risk 012, 013	Complete. Session held before January 2024 Board.
	iv	Arrange Auditor-led development session on risk for all Board Members	Risk 012, 013, 014, 017	Complete. Session held on 30 October 2023. Follow-up session planned.
	v	Increase Board Member attendance at and engagement in college/sector events.	Risk 012	Ongoing. Board Members have engaged in a range of CDN events and training modules over the course of the year.
b) Develop the Board as a team	i	Identify opportunities for strategic/creative gatherings, including residential event when practicable.	Risk 012	Residential event planning has remained on hold during the year; Board evaluation/effectiveness session to be held during Summer 2024 and strategy session planned for August.
c) Implement Diversity Succession Plan	i	Progress plans for co-option of committee members.	Risk 012	2024 non-executive recruitment round identified sufficient candidates with relevant skills including financial expertise; additional candidates for co-option were not identified. Chair will retain oversight and discuss co-option opportunities with Committee Chairs.
	ii	Provide refresher training for all Board Members on Equality & Diversity.	Risk 012, 013	To be progressed. Further EDI session involving all boards (following well-received all-board session held in 2018) to be explored during 2024-25.
	iii	Review website and external communications to promote accessibility and ensure alignment with current accessibility regulations.	Risk 012, 013	To be progressed.
	iv	Explore opportunities for joint information and recruitment events with Assigned Colleges to increase access and awareness among underrepresented groups.	Risk 012	To be considered for future recruitment activity.
d) Strengthen Student Engagement in Governance	i	Encourage/facilitate regular student-led items at Board meetings.	Risk 012	Complete/ongoing. Effective communications and working arrangements are established with each new cohort of Students/GCRSE.
	ii	Promote take-up of mentoring opportunity for 2023 incoming student Members.	Risk 012	Complete/ongoing. Mentoring arrangements were offered and taken up by Student Members in 2023-24.
e) Improve effectiveness of annual performance evaluation	I	Review the Board's annual evaluation process and increase Board Member engagement.	Risk 012	Complete/ongoing. New online format questionnaire was trialled and follow-up evaluation session to be held; N&R Committee to review once process is complete.

<sup>1</sup> The scope of the Development Plan was reduced this year in the context of the Ministerial/SFC review of governance. In particular, actions falling under Aim 2, which related to strengthening board oversight and strategic planning, were suspended pending a decision.

## Annex: Composite Results of Board Evaluation Questionnaire 2024

Question	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor	Comments
1. Board decisions and behaviour reflect the Code of Conduct and Nine Principles of Public Life.	5	5				The Board continues to be hampered by the lack of decisions and direction from the SFC and Scottish Ministers regarding the future of GCRB which leads to frustration and irritation which does effect behaviour.
2. We determine the vision, strategic direction, educational character, values and ethos of the Glasgow college system.	2	5	3			I feel there is still some tension between the values and ethos of the colleges, and the regional board. There is work to be done to determine the values, educational character, strategic direction, vision and ethos of the colleges. If the GCRB are given more authority and power, they could make the Glasgow FE system far better for Glasgow and beyond.
						The Board continues to drive all of these parameters even though it may be a pointless exercise, should future decisions by the Scottish Government negate these efforts
						We have a clear strategic direction but there needs to be stronger connections between this and the plans of the assigned colleges.
3. Our performance measurement system is clearly linked to the regional strategic framework and we monitor KPIs.	2	4	4			It is difficult to rate this as there was a mis-match in timing of the ROA with the academic year, however the strategic framework is clear.
						While this is effective I think there is more opportunity to cascade KPIs to colleges to have transparency over performance at that level.
						GCRB's strategic priorities and measures are robust, but the assigned colleges need to tie in their PIs much more tightly with ours.
4.Relevant stakeholders are engaged in developing the outcome agreement.	3	6	1			The ROA for GCRB provides high level strategic direction for the region and seeks to set the top level scene for assigned colleges. Would welcome opportunity to consider how we could engage with key stakeholders more systematically at a Greater Glasgow level across all sectors.
5.We provide leadership on ethics, equalities, diversity and staff welfare.	9		1			We have also ensured that all of these attributes are extended to the student body

6.We have regard to the social and economic needs of our area.	7	3				Discussion at Board meetings is clear on this, with Board members drawing on their particular experiences and areas of expertise.
7.Our membership reflects the community we serve.	2	7	1			I feel we could have more board members who don't necessarily have the professional skills many of the non-executive board members possess, but are invested in the FE system in their community and are committed to ensuring its continual survival and growth.
8.The voice of the students and the quality of their experience is central to all our decisions. We have open ongoing engagement with students, working in partnership and encouraging strong independent student associations.	7	3				I think the Strategy Board is too large- it needs to be tighter with links to employer organisations and the city region economic team. It shouldn't be composed in the same way as College Management Boards which have a different function, including being themselves employers
						The students are supported and encouraged to engage in all aspects of Board business and do so regularly. It would be good to hear some "real" stories from students via the student representatives. Stories that show where the sector is working, and where it is not.
9.We are aware of and foster good relationships with partner organisations that help us provide coherent learning and support employability.	2	6	2			We've had some really good speakers recently who have added to the members' understanding of the sector and how it can support students.
						It would be helpful to know more about the scope of which we consider to be partner organisations.
10.Mechanisms are in place to ensure effective oversight at regional level of the quality and inclusivity of learning.	2	4	3			Very much depends on good flow of relevant information and analysis from assigned colleges. This can be patchy which can at times inhibit comprehensive oversight.
						Im not sure I can tick a box for this....we review texts and have student reps but I don't think we have oversight of the quality and inclusiveness of learning
11.We fulfil our primary accountability to our funding body by delivering our outcome agreement and fulfilling our statutory duty and terms of our grant.	6	3	1			
12.We fulfil our accountability to students, public, employers and our community for provision of education that enhances social and economic wellbeing.	2	8				Patterns of accountability could be strengthened by reshaping the board and streamlining it as suggested above

13. Our meeting arrangements and supporting documentation facilitate transparent, informed, rigorous and timely decision-making.	8	2				The administration of the board and committee duties, as well as reports and minutes are timely and accurate
						But we do at times rely on assigned colleges providing full and relevant reports which are on occasion not as full as we might expect.
						The conduct of meetings could be improved by separating out matters for decision from matters for noting and only allowing discussion on the latter when appropriate.
14. Our scheme of delegation is clear and fit for purpose and provides for appropriate two-way communication.	9	1				
15. We set the risk appetite, balancing risk and opportunity, and communicate this to management staff.	6	3	1			The Board has engaged in a risk review and workshop and will continue this activity in the next academic year
16. We ensure sound risk management and internal control systems are in operation.	6	2	2			This is a matter from the CEO and the Chair, rather than something which needs to be discussed by the full board or its committees unless there is something that members attention needs to be drawn to.
17. The Audit and Assurance Committee reviews the comprehensiveness, reliability and integrity of all our assurances on the governance, risk and control frameworks, engaging with internal and external auditors and monitoring any actions recommended.	6	3				We are well served with enthusiastic and committed AAR members and well supported with the executives and both internal and external auditors
18. We ensure our body's sustainability, including compliance with the Financial Memorandum and the Scottish Public Finance Manual, ensuring adequate reporting and monitoring and economic, efficient and effective use of our funds.	3	7				Ongoing sustainability is a major risk factor to the Glasgow College Region, and more cooperation will be necessary in terms of shared services and consolidation of curricula will be required
						This is extremely challenging in the present environment. I think there is more that could be done but only with a level of buy-in from the colleges that doesn't currently exist.
19. As an employer we promote positive employee relations, we comply with the Staff Governance Standard and we ensure fair and effective staff management.	6	4				The appointment of union sponsored Non Executives to the Board will enhance positive employee relations



20.The Board Chair provides leadership and ensures board effectiveness, working with the Executive Director and Board Secretary.	8	2				
21.Our Board and Committees have the right balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge of the college region to fulfil their role effectively.	3	5	1			Broadly speaking this is true, but it is recognised by the chair that we need to bolster certain skill sets and we have sought to recruit new members accordingly.
						The appointment of new Non Executives will help refresh the Board's overall skills profile
						Comments on board size and make up above
22.We abide by collective responsibility, taking decisions in the interests of the body, managing conflicts of interest appropriately and disclose our register of interests.	7	3				
23.Staff and student members are treated as full board members.	9	1				It would be good if staff members could present information in the same way student representatives do. Perhaps the addition of trade union representatives on the Board will address this. The colleges are the staffs' place of work so it's important everyone sees the implications for students if the "workplace" is not a productive one.
24.We have an open and transparent process for recruiting and setting the performance measures for our Executive Director. We provide constructive challenge and support to the Executive Director and hold them to account.	6	4				
25.The Board Secretary is appointed by the Board with the appropriate skills and experience and is available to advise all board members and committees.	8	2				
26.All members undertake training tailored to their needs (including committee training where appropriate); new members receive induction tailored to their needs.	4	5	1			Always room for doing more training and development. Refresher learner is always a plus.

27. We review the Board's effectiveness annually using a robust self-evaluation process, and undertake an externally facilitated review at least every five years.	7	3				
28. We work in partnership at a local, regional and national level to secure: coherent education provision in our locality; commonly agreed outcomes; develop agreed priorities; and address local needs as well as national priorities and specialisms.	3	6	1			<p>The working relationship between GCRB and the assigned colleges is key to the delivery of strategic priorities and warrants specific focus. The Board Effectiveness questionnaire structure doesn't reflect this other than in the opportunity to leave comments. I suggest that in a future iteration feedback on this important relationship is made more explicit.</p> <p>Collaboration is dependent on partners</p>