

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 20 June 2022
Paper Title	Regional Strategy Update
Agenda Item	14
Paper Number	BM6-K
Responsible Officer	Martin Boyle, Executive Director
Status	Disclosable
Action	For noting

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** The Glasgow Region Strategic Plan 2017-2022 was the first regional college strategy of its kind, developed in collaboration with Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board (GCRB), Glasgow's three assigned colleges, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and partners. It sought to provide high-level strategic direction for shaping the direction of the Glasgow region's college offering.
- 1.2** As it lapses, GCRB and partners will bring forward an ambitious new strategy for the Glasgow college region, recognising the significant progress already made, but setting the context for the next stage of the region's development, while also recognising the significantly-changed economic, social and political context.
- 1.3** The realities of the current position include a world which is moving into post-pandemic recovery, a challenging financial position with medium-term flat cash settlement, evolution and review of the nation's tertiary system, a continuing evolution of the digital revolution on education, a greater focus on the importance of climate change and sustainability, and a complex and fragmented learning offering across multiple levels and qualifications. In addition, the continued uncertainty of the review of the Glasgow college region means that this is a time of significant strategic complexity – but there is continued importance of the availability of effective college education providing opportunities for our citizens and the region.
- 1.4** In this context it is proposed that the new Glasgow Region Strategy covers the period 2023 to 2026, and this paper provides an update to board on progress, focus, timelines and activity.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that board **notes** progress made towards delivery of the new Glasgow Region Strategy 2023-2026, and the forthcoming strategic engagement board session.

3. Report

3.1 The timeline for the next phase of work will be:

- July-August 2022: Completion of draft document
- September 2022: Board strategic development session
- September 2022: Glasgow College Group Principals' engagement session
- September 2022: Glasgow College Group Learning and Teaching engagement session
- September 2022: Chairs, Principals and Executive director engagement session
- October 2022: Final draft document

3.2 With effective stakeholder engagement and partnership working across the Glasgow city region eco-system, the focus for the Glasgow Region Strategy 2023-2026 will be:

- Evolution to safeguard an effective, sustainable and viable Glasgow college system
- Curriculum Review for successful delivery of the Glasgow learners' journey
- Resources Review (Estates, IT and other resources) and future planning to deliver the 'college of the future'
- Play a leading role on delivering economic and social transformation
- Lead and contribute to Glasgow and Scotland's environment and sustainability ambitions
- Effective delivery of Glasgow review outcomes

3.3 These core focus statements are intended to ensure delivery of concrete processes and direction for the region. They will be developed into change statements for consideration by the board to map out the purpose and expected change for the period 2023-2026.

3.3 Key documents for the development of strategic aims include:

- A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22¹
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation²
- Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy³
- The Scottish College of the Future⁴

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/>

³ <https://glasgowcityregion.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/GCR-EconomicStrategy-Final.pdf>

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c8847f58dfc8c45fa705366/t/5fd6346d481cfa31adc17941/1607873646806/ICCF+Scotland.pdf>

3.4 The focus and language of the *Glasgow Region Strategy 2023-2026* has been developed in conjunction with Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board members, including at strategic development sessions, stakeholder engagement sessions, main board and committees. It is intended that it reflects and continues the focus developed in the Outcome Agreement 2022-2023, and continues to articulate these **strategic aims**:

- For **learners**, we ensure that they are at the centre of the system, with ensured equality, fairness, lifetime access to learning, skills, qualifications, 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.
- 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 will play a key role in strengthening communities and building partnerships that collectively address the challenges and opportunities for economic and social 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 further 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, optimise digital technology, and tackle the climate crisis. The Glasgow college system plays an active role in working with partners to support economic and social recovery and development.

4. Glasgow Region Strategic Plan for College Education 2017-2022 – Review

4.1 The lapsing 2017-2022 strategic plan, included seven Learning Priorities and four Added-Value Drivers, as follows:

Learning Priorities

- **Engage with all our communities and provide the highest quality facilities and resources for learning**

There has been significant investment in the estate of the Glasgow college region, and this continued during the period of this strategy, with development and maintenance on-going, tied to the SFC's estates review. There has been additional ongoing investment in IT during the period as the colleges have evolved to provide a significantly more digital offering, driven in part by the necessity of online delivery during the Covid pandemic.

Engagement with communities has been led by individual colleges, though GCRB has sought to provide strategic engagement at a high level with the sector, funding bodies, local and national government and other partners. This coordinated and coherent partnership approach is required to expand with coherence in the next phase, and is planned to align with the work of College Development Network's Economic Recovery Group.

- **Offer engaging learning experiences to develop skills for learning, life and work**

The Glasgow college system offers an extensive, comprehensive curriculum offering, regularly aligned to specific partnership work with industry, or to specialist provision such as World Skills. There is strong evidence of industry engagement, and of industry involvement in course design and delivery, seeking to provide learners with relevant skills. A comprehensive offering across the SCQF ladder ensures multiple entry and exit points, and opportunities for transition. There is some evidence of partnership working, though significant opportunities remain to develop a more integrated partnership approach to planning, delivery and transition between the college, and also university partners.

Performance Indicators for positive destinations remain high, with a strong percentage of college learners making effective transitions to further study and/or work during the period. There is evidence of learners with protected characteristics, or from SIMD10 postcode areas, having lower attainment success rates and this will require to be a focus of development in the next phase to ensure that college education is meeting the core need of these group to provide access and effective progression.

- **Promote high quality and innovative learning, teaching and assessment**

The colleges have continued to review learning and teaching, and to promote quality delivery via a variety of methods, including focused staff conferences and involvement in national developments. There remains an important opportunity to more fully meet the evolving needs of 'Next Gen' qualifications, to fully and consistently realise the needs of meta-skills development across the whole

curriculum, and to more fully and consistently collaborate across the colleges in shared approaches.

- **Deliver an inclusive and supportive student experience for all learners. This will include excellent guidance and learner support**

Extensive investment in guidance and learner support continues to provide targeted and tailored support to learners, with specialist and specialised offerings to students with particular needs. Mental health and hardship support have been a focus through the pandemic. There remains opportunity to more accurately and closely align support offerings to ensure a baseline 'Glasgow offer' which is consistent and available to all learners.

- **Encourage all students to enhance their learning as individuals, as representatives, and as officers in strong and effective student associations**

During this period, Student Association membership on college and RSB boards has effectively ensured that the student voice is placed firmly at the heart of governance. Decisions have consistently been made with high-quality input from student representatives and enhanced development work has included mentoring and development sessions. While student input has, in part, been dictated by the enthusiasm of individual student members, this has been a successful and consistent approach which has added significant value.

- **Provide more opportunities for learners to develop their skills in real-work environments**

The Glasgow colleges have embedded Foundation Apprenticeship frameworks across the region, have evolved an effective model of delivery and continue to be one of Scotland's most successful deliverers of the FA model which provides direct experience and real-world experience.

Across other levels, there is strong evidence of courses which have embedded industry engagement in a wide variety of manners and to a high level.

There remains significant opportunity for more effectively building partnership and the views of business and industry into strategic planning at a college and regional level.

- **Offer clear pathways into work and further study; supporting every learner into a positive post-course destination**

Overall positive destination performance indicators are sound, and there is clear evidence of college education providing a strong and effective route into further study and/or employment. This must continue to be developed in an agile and responsive manner in line with evolving regional and national needs.

There have been some effective projects during this time designed to deliver effective transitions, though these remain most regularly on a local or individual subject level. There is significant opportunity to deliver enhanced transition between the colleges, and onwards to universities to more fully meet the government's interim target of 75% enhanced transition to university. A more

coherent and effective regional education eco-system partnership is required to move this beyond the current fragmented position.

Added-Value Drivers

- **Sharing skills and knowledge**

The infrastructure of the Glasgow College Group meetings has proven to be a fertile space for effective sharing of skills and knowledge, as well as facilitating some regional planning and coherence of approach. The GCG Sustainability Group and HR directors have taken ownership of the regional approach to shared CPD and staff development, sharing opportunities, and reporting to the GCG Executive Group.

The loss of the regional lead posts has reduced capacity to drive shared initiatives forward during this period, and a new model of working groups is being trialled.

- **Offering a coherent and consistent student experience**

Significant investment has been made in ensuring an effective student experience during this period. This has included the addition of support for care-experienced learners, mental health and wellbeing support, enterprise and entrepreneurial development, and effective engagement with Student Associations.

Progress has been made in ensuring smoother transitions between institutions, and to HE partners, as well as providing increased experience with employers, though there remains difference of approach, funding, access and transition which remains an option for consideration and development.

- **Developing a regionally responsive curriculum**

The Glasgow-region Memorandum of understanding has sought to provide clear and effective guidelines for operating in a shared region, seeking to reduce and remove internal competition in the system and to increase a cooperative approach which creates an effective space for the removal of duplication. This has had evidenced success in areas such as Foundation Apprenticeship delivery, where cooperation and regional planning have provided a more coherent regional approach.

There remains opportunity to more fully align the curriculum with economic need and to more fully cement the position of the colleges in social and economic regeneration, as well as in evolving the next generation of qualifications to support high-performing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), lifelong learning, and a new approach to effective, agile course development hand in hand with industry.

- **Building efficient regional structures**

GCRB has embedded its positive as funding body of the Glasgow college region during this strategic period, making use of effective and efficient governance procedures to provide an overview position from which to make funding allocations across the Glasgow colleges while making effective use of in-year flexibilities and the ability to move funding, credits and provision between colleges. The regional governance structure is supported by the Financial Memorandum and Memorandum of Understanding, as well as the Glasgow College Group functions, ensuring input from the

colleges to shaping activity and working in collaboration to reach positions which are beneficial to the region as a whole.

There remain challenges in this structure, and the on-going Glasgow region review seeks to address these, so this strategic aim is evolved and retained for the new strategy. There is also a recognition that some strategic changes, for example in making cross-regional changes, savings, or in more deeply integrated and shared services, have not been effectively delivered during this time.

5. Risk and Compliance Analysis

- 5.1** The Glasgow Region Strategy 2023-2026 will have cross-cutting relevance across the GCRB Risk Register, and outcomes will be reported both through the Risk Register but also via the introduction of the new GCRB dashboard after implementation to ensure effective governance and reporting

6. Financial and Resource Analysis

- 6.1** The resourcing, sustainability and viability of the Glasgow college system will be a clear focus of strands of the new strategy, including the delivery of the regional review, but also the Resources Review and any evolution in the system to more fully and effectively unlock the potential of regionalisation.

7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1** An equalities impact report will be produced in conjunction with the new strategy document, and particular attention is given to outcomes which are intended to support learners and provide equitable, effective access to education and opportunities.

8. Learner Implications

- 8.1** The effective safeguarding of the Glasgow college system is of critical importance to ensure successful outcomes for learners, including effective access to education, an effective learner journey, seamless transitions through and between organisations, and effective partner working with training and university partners.